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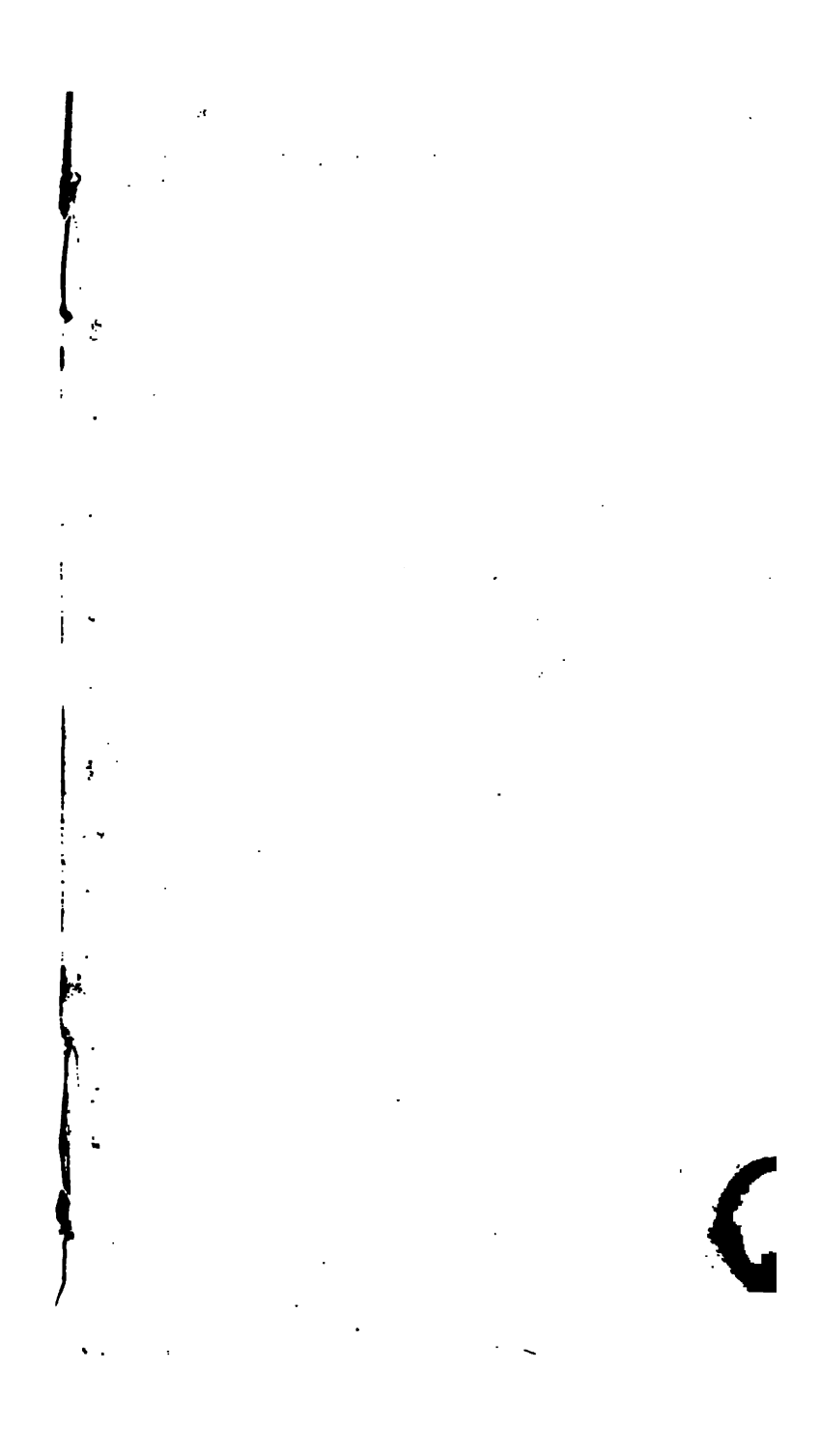
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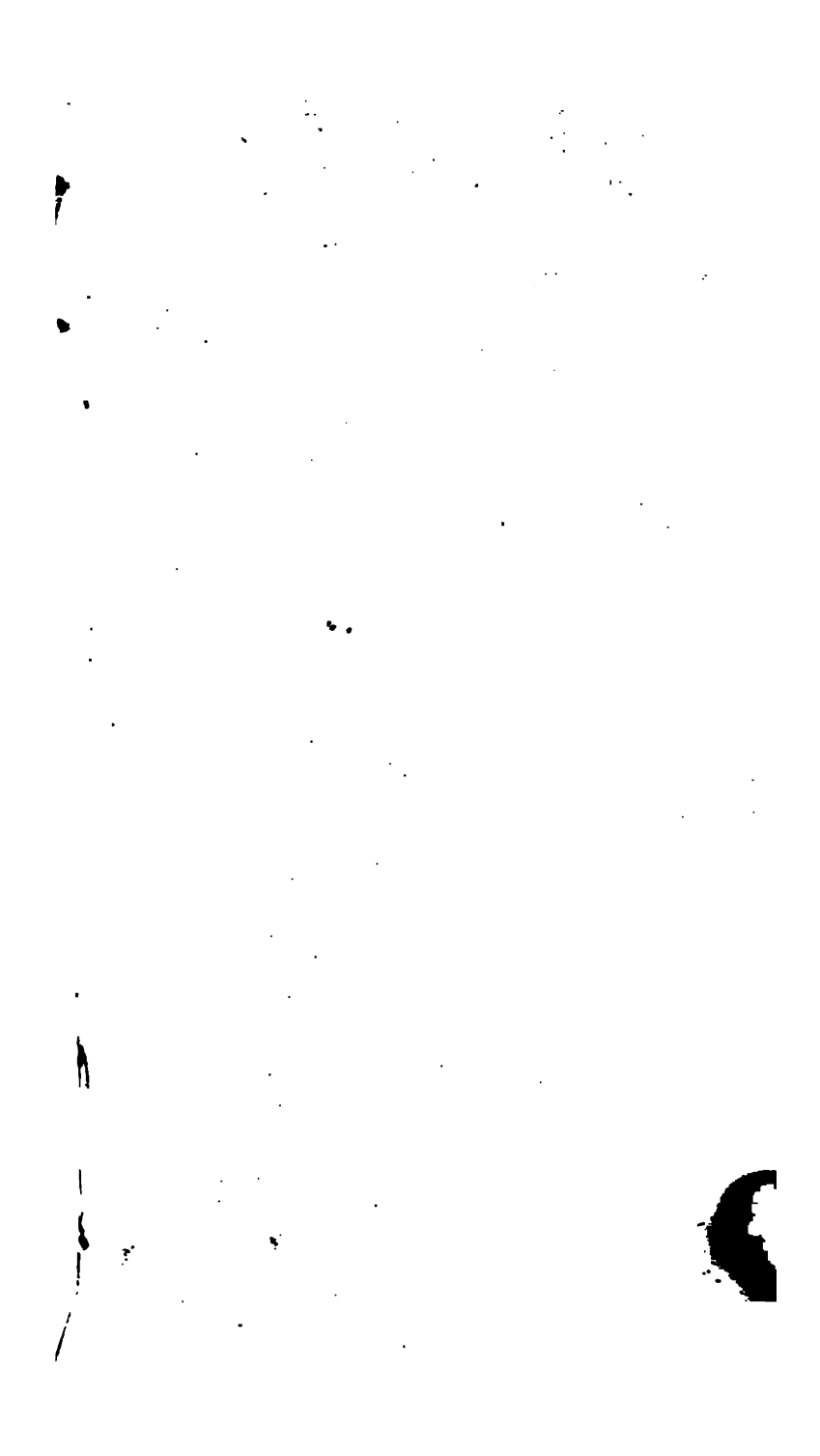
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NEW











COLIN CLINK:

CONTAINING

THE

CONTENTIONS, DISSENTIONS, LOVES, HATREDS,
JEALOUSIES, HYPOCRISIES, AND
VICISSITUDES,

INCIDENT TO

HIS CHEQUERED LIFE.

BY CHARLES HOOTON.

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COLIN CLINK.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

Affords a capital illustration of the way of the world. For whereas, as knaves and fools not unusually take precedence of better men, so this chapter, though placed at the head of a long regiment, is yet inferior to any one that comes after.

THE famous John Bunyan, or Bunion,—for the true orthography of this renowned name is much doubted amongst the learned of the present age,—has laid it down as an axiom in that most glorious of all Progresses, the Pilgrim's Progress, that "He that is down needs fear no fall." And who, in good truth, will undertake to dispute the good pilgrims remark? Since nothing can be more clear to an eye as philosophic as was that of Mr. Bunyan, that if a man be seated on the ground he most certainly is not in much danger of slipping through his chair; or that, being already at the bottom of the water, he "needs fear no fall" from the yard-arm.

On this assurance, I take courage for Colin Clink. Down in the world with respect to its goods, down in society, down in the estimation of his own father and mother, and down in that which our modern political ragamuffins are pleased to term the "accident" of birth, he assuredly had not the least occasion for a single instant to trouble his mind with fears of falling any lower. For, happily, it is not in this world of solid matter, as in the world of spirits,—that a deep still lower than the lowest can open its atrocious mouth, and threaten to devour us.

From the very earliest, therefore, he had, and could have, but one prospect before him, and that was, the prospect of rising above his first condition. To be sure, like Bruce's spider, he afterwards fell sometimes; but then he reflected that rising and falling, like standing up and sitting down, constitute a portion of the lot of every man's life.

It is currently related amongst the good folks of the country-side wherein our hero first saw the light, that while three or four officious neighbourly women were stealing noiselessly about the room, attending to the wants of the sick woman, and while the accoucheur of the parish was inly congratulating himself on having introduced his round five-thousandth child to the troublesome pleasures of this world, young Colin turned from the arms of the nurse who held him, and, as though even then conscious of the obligation conferred upon him, by his admission to the stage of life, stretched out his hand towards the astonished surgeon, and in a very audible voice exclaimed, "Thank you, doctor—thank you!"

I do not vouch for the truth of this anecdote; but this I do say,—

whether or not he had anything to be thankful for will be seen, much as he himself saw it, during the course of this his own true history.

That he was lucky in opening his eyes, even though in an humble cottage, amidst the scenes that nature spread round him, is certain enough. To be born poor as the spirit of poverty herself, is sufficiently bad; but far worse is it to be thus born in the bottom of some noisome alley of a vast town, where a single ray of sunlight never falls, nor a glimpse of the sky itself is ever caught, beyond what may be afforded by that small dusky section of it which seems to lie like a dirty ceiling on the chimney-tops, and even then cannot be seen, unless (to speak like a geometer) by raising the face to a horizontal position and the eyes perpendicularly. Fresh air, fields, rivers, clouds and sunshines, redeem half the miseries of want, and make a happy joyful being of him who, in any other sense, cannot call one single atom of the world his own.

Colin Clink was a native of the village of Bramleigh, about twenty miles west of that city of law and divinity, of sermons and proctors' parchment, the silent city of York.

Some time previous to his birth, his mother had taken a fancy, suggested, very probably, by the powerful pleading of a weak pocket, or, with equal probability, by something else to the full as argumentative, to reside in a small cottage, (as rural landowners are in the habit of terming such residences, though they are known to everybody else as hovels,) altogether by herself; if I except a little girl, some five or six years of age, who accompanied her in the capacity of embryo housemaid, gruel-maker, and, when strong enough, of nurse to the expected "little stranger."

For the discharge of the more important and pressing duties incident to her situation, she depended upon one or two of those permanently unemployed old crones, usually to be found in country places, who pass the greater portion of their time in "preserving" themselves, like red herrings or hung beef, over the idle smoke of their own scanty fires, and who, as they are always waiting chances, may be had by asking for at any moment. Their minimum of wages depend upon a small sum of money derived by Mistress Clink, the mother of our hero, from a source which, as she then followed no particular employment, we are compelled to pronounce obscure.

The sagacious reader may, perhaps, in the height of his wisdom, marvel how so young a child as one of five or six years of age should be introduced to his notice in the capacity above mentioned; but the practice is common enough, and may be accounted for, in the way of cause and effect, upon the most modern philosophical principles. Thus:—Great states require great taxes to support them; great taxes produce political extravagance; political extravagance enforces domestic economy; and domestic economy, now-a-days, demands that every pair of hands, however small, shall labour for the milk that supports them; and every little heart, however light, shall be filled with the pale cares and yearning anxieties which naturally belong only to mature age.

Of such as these was Mistress Clink's diminutive housemaid, Fanny Woodruff.

Brought up amidst hardships from the first day of her existence, through the agency either of the rod, the heavier stick, or of keener hanger, during at least twelve hours out of every twenty-four that pass—

ed over her head; she presented, at five years of age, the miniature picture, painted in white and yellow,—for all the carnation had fled from Nature's palette when she drew this mere sketch of incipient woman,—she presented, I repeat, the miniature picture, not of what childhood is, a bright and joyful outburst of fresh life into a new world of strange attractive things—not of that restless inquiring existence, curious after every created object, and happy amidst them all; but of a little pale, solemn thing, looking as though it had suddenly fallen, heart-checked, upon a world of evil—as though its eyes had looked only upon discouragement, and its hands been stretched in love, only to be repulsed with indifference or with hatred. The picture of a little baby soul, prematurely forced upon the grown-up anxieties of the world, and made almost a woman in demeanour, before she knew half the attractive actions of a child.

Notwithstanding all this, and in spite of the unnatural care-worn expressions of her little melancholy countenance, Fanny's features retained something of that indefinite quality commonly termed "interesting." Two black eyes, which showed nothing but black between the lids, looked openly but fearfully from beneath the arched browless bones of the forehead, and, with an irrepressible questioning in the face of the spectator, seemed ever to be asking doubtfully, whether there was or was not such a creature as a friend in the world; but her sunken cheeks and wasted arms belied the happy age of childhood, and spoke only of hard usage and oft-continued suffering.

On the eventful day that gave young Master Colin Clink to the world, and about twelve hours previous to the time at which he *should have made* his actual appearance, Mistress Clink his mother was lying upon a bed in an inner ground-floor room of her cottage, thinking—if the troubled and confused ideas that filled her brain might be termed thinking—upon her coming trials; while little Fanny, taking temporary advantage of the illness of her mistress, and relaxing, in a moment of happy forgetfulness, again into a child, was sitting upon the ground near the door, and noiselessly amusing herself by weighing in a halfpenny pair of tin scales the sand which had been strown upon the floor by way of carpet, when the abrupt entrance of some one at the outer door, though unheard by the sick woman amidst her half-dreaming reveries, so startled the little offender on the ground, that in her haste to scramble on to her feet, and recover all the solemn proprieties and demure looks which, in a returning moment of infantile nature, had been cast aside, she upset the last imaginary pound of sand-made sugar that had been heaped up on a stool beside her, and at the same time chanced to strike her head against the other side of the little round table which stood at hand, whereby a bottle of physic was tossed uninjured on the bed, and a spoon precipitated to the floor. Her countenance instantly changed to an expression which told that the crime was of too black a dye to be forgiven. But patience without tears, and endurance without complaint, were also as visible; virtues which hard necessities had instilled into her bosom long before.

Ill as Mistress Clink may readily be presumed to have been, she started half up in bed, leaning with her elbow upon the pillow, her countenance, pale and ghastly with sickness, rendered still more pale and horrible with anger, and gasping for words, which even then came faint in sound though strong in bitterness, she began to rate the child vehemently for her accidental disaster.

In another instant a female servant of the squire of the parish stood by the bedside. Mistress Clink fell back upon the pillow while her face for a moment blushed scarlet, and then became again as white as ashes.

"Don't rate the poor child, if you please, ma'am," said the woman. "Poor thing! it's only a bag of bones at best."

"Oh, I'm ill!" sighed Mistress Clink.

"Ay, dear! you do look ill," responded the woman.

"I'll run and fetch the doctor; but, if you please, ma'am, master has sent this little basket of things for you."

"What things?" asked the sick woman, slightly rallying, and in an eager voice.

"Linen, ma'am," observed the servant, at the same time opening the lid of the basket.

"How very good of him!" whispered Fanny.

"Yes, child," replied the serving woman; "he's always very kind to poor women."

The invalid was aroused; she almost raised herself again upon her hand.

"Very kind, is he? Yes, yes—say so, say so. But—" and she hesitated, and passed her hand across her forehead, as though mentally striving to recall her flitting senses—"Take 'em back—away with 'em—tell him—Oh! I'm ill, I'm ill!"

She fell back insensible. The old woman and Fanny screamed first, and then ran for the surgeon. Within a very brief period Master Colin Clink appeared before the world, some half a day or so earlier, than, to the best of my belief, nature originally intended he should. But it is the peculiar faculty of violent tempers to precipitate events, and realize prospective troubles before their time.

As the reader will subsequently be called upon to make a more close acquaintance with the professional gentleman now introduced to notice, it may not be improper briefly to observe, that, amongst many other recommendations to the notice and favour of the public, the doctor offered himself as a guardian to "persons of unsound mind," with, of course, the kindest and best mode of treatment that could possibly be adopted. In plain words, he kept a "retreat," or private madhouse, for the especial and peculiar accommodation of those eager young gentlemen who may, perchance, find it more agreeable to shut up their elderly relations in a lunatic's cell, than to wait until death shall have relieved them of the antique burthen. The doctor's establishment was one of the worst of a bad kind; and, as we shall eventually see, he was in the regular practice of making a very curious application of it.

We may now conclude the chapter.

While doctor Rowel was preparing for his departure, he chanced, in the course of some casual chat with one of the old gossips present, to ask where the sick woman's husband was at this interesting moment of his life; but, unluckily for his curiosity, all the old women were immediately seized with a momentary deafness, which totally prevented them from hearing his question, though it was twice repeated. He then asked how it came about that the Squire had sent such a pretty basket of baby-linen to Mistress Clink? But their ears were equally impervious to the sound of that inquiry as to the other; thus proving to a demonstration, that while there are some matters which certain ingenious peo-

ple imagine they thoroughly understand even from the slightest hints and innuendoes, (which is precisely the case with the good reader himself at this moment, so far as our present story is concerned,) there are other matters that, put them into whatever language you will, can never be rendered at all comprehensible to discreet grown-up people.

Nevertheless, the doctor did not depart unenlightened. Though the women were deaf and ignorant, a little child was present who seemed to know all about it. Finding that nobody else answered the great gentleman, little Fanny screwed her courage up to the speaking point, and looking the doctor earnestly in the face, said,

"If you please sir, the lady that brought the basket said it was because the squire is always so very kind to poor women."

The doctor burst into a laugh, though what for nobody present could imagine, as all the old women, and the child too, looked grave enough in all conscience.

CHAPTER II.

Involves a doubtful affair still deeper in doubt, through the attempts made to clear it up; and at the same time finds Colin Clink a reputable father in a quarter-the least expected.

SHORTLY after the maid-servant had returned to Kiddal, (a name by which Squire Lupton's family-house had been known for centuries,) and explained to her master, as in duty bound, how she found Mistress Clink, and how she left the linen, and how, likewise, another boy had been added to the common stock of mortals, that benevolent and considerate gentleman assumed a particularly grave aspect; and then, for the special edification and future guidance of the damsel before him, he began to "improve" the event which had just taken place in the village, and to express his deep regret that the common orders of people were so very inconsiderate as to rush headlong, as it were, upon the increase of families which, after all, they could not support without entailing a portion of the burthen upon the rich and humane, who, strictly speaking, ought to have no hand whatever in the business. His peroration consisted of some excellent advice to the girl herself, (equally applicable to every body else in similar situations,) not by any means to think of marrying either the gardener or the gamekeeper, until she knew herself capable of maintaining a very large family, without palming any of them either upon generous individuals or on the parish. She could not do better than keep the case of Mistress Clink continually before her eyes, as a standing warning of the evil effects of being in too great a hurry. The girl retired to her kitchen filled with great ideas of her masters' goodness, and strengthened in her determination to disbelieve every word of the various slanders afloat throughout the lower part of the house, and through the village at large, which turned the squire's kindness into mere merchandise, by attributing it to interested motives.

That same evening, as the squire sat alone by lamplight taking a glass of wine in his library, he was observed by the servant who had carried in the decanter to be in a humour not the most sprightly and frolicsome imaginable; and so he told the maid who had been lectured in the afternoon, at the same time going so far as to say, that he thought if master

was more prudent sometimes than some folks said he was, it might be that he would not have occasion to be melancholy so often. The maid replied, that she knew all about it; and if the squire was melancholy, it was because some people in the world were so very wicked as to run head-first on to families, and then go for to come on the first people in the parish to maintain them. It was his own supernumerary goodness that got imposed on by deceitful and resolute woman, who went about having children; because they knew that the squire was father to the whole parish, and would not let little innocents starve, let them belong to whomsoever they might.

John was about rising to reply to this able defence when the library bell rung, and called him up stairs instead. The squire wanted to see his steward immediately; but the steward was just then getting his dinner, and therefore—as the dinner of a steward, in a great house with an easy master, is not, as Richard Oastler well knows, a matter of very easy despatch—he sent word that he was at that moment very deeply engaged in digesting his accounts, but would wait upon his master as soon as possible. In the meantime, the kitchen was converted into a debating room by John and the maid; but as the same subject was very shortly afterwards much better discussed in the second chamber, we will repair thither and ascertain what passed.

"Come in, Longstaff," cried the squire, in reply to a tap at the door which announced the presence of the steward, and in another second that worthy approached the table.

"Dined, Longstaff?—take a glass of wine? Sit down, sit down. I've a little matter on hand, Longstaff, that requires to be rather nicely managed, and I know of no man so likely to do it well as you are, Longstaff, eh?"

"You flatter me, sir—" began Mr. Longstaff; but the squire interrupted him.

"No, no, Longstaff, no,—I flatter no man. Plain speaking is a jewel; but I know I can depend upon you for a little assistance when it is needed, better than upon any other man that ever entered my service."

"You flatter—" again began the steward, but a second time was interrupted by his master.

"No, no, Longstaff, no, no,—truth's no flattery, as everybody knows; and no man need be afraid or ashamed of speaking truth before the best face in all Christendom."

"Mr. Longstaff mistook this last observation, and interpreted it as a compliment to his own beauty; he therefore felt himself bound to repeat his previously intended observation, and accordingly began,

"You flat—" but for the third time was prevented giving utterance to it, through the interruption of Squire Lupton.

"I'll tell you what, Longstaff,—the thing is here. A little secrecy and a little manœuvring are just what's required. If you can *Talleyrand* it a little,—you understand me?"

And the squire eked out his meaning with a certain jerk upwards of the head more significant than words, but which, when dimly translated into English, seemed to mean as much as the mysterious popular phrase, "that's your ticket." He then drank a bumper, and pushed the bottle to Longstaff, waiting in seeming anxiety half a minute before he called again.

"Well, Longstaff, magistrate as I am, and bound of course to carry

the law, while it is law, into execution, I must say this,—and I speak from my own observation and experience, as you well know,—while the members of the British Legislature allow that clause of the forty-third of Elizabeth to remain upon the statute-books, they do not do their duty as legislators either to man, woman or child."

A loud thump on the table, accompanied with corresponding emphasis of speech, made the word *child* sound a great deal bigger than either man or woman. The squire then went on,—

"Look at the effect of it, Longstaff. Any man,—I myself,—you—any of us, or all of us,—are liable at any time to have fathered upon us a thing, a brat,—any tinker's whelp that ever was bread, very likely in Cumberland or Cornwall, or a thousand miles off,—though in point of fact, you or I had no more acquaintance with that child's mother—no, no more than we had with Donna Maria! Now mark, Longstaff. You know I've been something of a teaser in the course of my time to people of that sort. I've made them pay for their whistle, as Franklin says pretty smartly. Well, what is the consequence?—what ensues? Why, just this. After I've ferreted out some of the worst of them, and put them, as I thought upon better manners,—the very next time anything of the kind happens again, they lay their heads together, and have the audacious impudence,—the rascality, as I may call it,—the—the—the abominable—however, I should say, to—to go before the overseers of the parish, and persist in swearing every child, without exception, every one, girl and boy,—to me! Now, Longstaff, I dare say you have heard reports of this kind in the course of your acquaintance with one person or other, though I never mentioned a word about it before. Don't you think it a shame, a disgrace to the Parliament of Elizabeth that passed that law, that all county magistrates were not personally and especially *excepted* from the operation of that clause? and that it was not rendered a misdemeanour, punishable by imprisonment or the stocks, for any woman, no matter what her degree, to swear a child to any county magistrate? Such a provision, Longstaff, would have effectually secured individuals like me against the malice of convicted persons, and prevented the possibility of such statements being circulated, as are now quite as common in the parish as rain and sunshine."

"Certainly, sir," replied Longstaff, acquiescingly; "but then, sir, might it not have operated, in the case of some individuals of the magistracy, as a sort of warrant of impunity to—"

"Impunity!" exclaimed the squire. "I mean to assert and to maintain it, that if Queen Bess had been a man, as she ought to have been, women would never have had it in their power to swear with impunity one half,—no, nor one-tenth part of that they are now swearing every hour of their lives. Why, look ye,—here again today,—this very morning, that young woman Clink is laid up of another; and, as sure as there's head and tail to a shilling, so sure am I that, unless something be done beforehand to find a father somewhere or other for the young cub, it'll be laid at *my* door, along with all the rest. But I'm resolved this time to put a stop to it, and, as a man's word goes for nothing, though he be magistrate or anything else, we'll try for once if we cannot fix the saddle on the right horse some other way."

The complying Mr. Longstaff willingly lent himself to the squire's designs; and, after some farther conversation of a similar character to that above given, it was agreed that the steward, acting as Squire Ldp-

ton's agent, should make use of all the means and appliances within his power, in order to ward off the expected declaration of Mistress Clink, and to induce her to avow before the overseers the real father of our hero Colin.

Accordingly, as soon as the condition of that good lady would allow of a visit from Mr. Longstaff, he waited upon her, stuffed with persuasions to the very throat; and, after an hour and a half's exhortations, coupled with a round number of slices of that pleasant root, commonly called "the root of all evil," he succeeded, to his great joy and satisfaction, in extorting from her a solemn promise to confer the honour of her son's parentage upon any man in the parish rather than upon Squire Lupton.

As a moral-minded historian, I must confess this whole transaction to be a most nefarious one, regard it in whatever light we may; but the truth is, and with sorrow be it said, that throughout all that part of the country in which the scene of our story is laid, lying is commonly regarded only as a convenient subterfuge, without shame, and without crime. And while something less than the value of a shilling will purchase from even "respectable" inhabitants of that district as plump a lie as any connoisseur need wish to meet with, it is nothing very surprising that Mistress Clink should thus have given way for once to the general failing of her locality.

Longstaff was delighted with the success of his negotiation, and reflecting that there is nothing like striking while the iron is hot, he would not be satisfied unless Mistress Clink agreed there and then to go with him to Skinwell the overseer, to make her declaration respecting Colin's father.

On the road to that functionary's office, Longstaff employed himself in suggesting to the excellent woman by his side the names of several individuals, with whom secretly he was upon very ill terms, as fit and proper persons from amongst whom to select a parent, chuckling with renewed glee every now and then as the thought came afresh over his mind of taking revenge upon some one or other of his enemies, at the rate of two and sixpence or three shillings per week. Mistress Clink replied to his suggestions by assuring him that she would endeavour to satisfy him in that particular to his heart's content.

Skinwell, besides being overseer of the parish during the year of which we are writing, was by profession a lawyer; and, in order to obtain a living in so small a field, was in the regular practice of getting up petty squabbles in a friendly way, and merely for the sake of obtaining justice to all parties, between his neighbours and acquaintances. A clothes-line across a yard, a stopped-up drain, or the question whether a certain ditch belonged to the right or to the left hand land-owner, would afford him food for a fortnight, and while he laboured most assiduously in order to involve two parties in litigation, he contrived so ingeniously to gloss over his own conduct with the varnish of "favour to none, justice to all," as invariably to come off without offending either.

On entering Skinwell's office, Longstaff and the lady found that worthy at work on one side of a double desk, face to face, though divided by a miniature railing along the top, with a poor miserable looking stripling of a clerk, not unlike, both in shape and colour to a bricklayer's lath.

Skinwell looked vacantly up at Mrs. Clink, recognized the steward by

a nod, and then went on with his work. In the meantime Mrs. C. sat down on a three-legged stool, placed there for the accommodation of weary clients, behind a high partition of boards, which divided the room, and inclosed, as in a sheep-pen, the man of law and his slave.

At one end of the mantel-shelf stood a second-hand brown japanned tin box, divided into three compartments, and respectively lettered, "Delivery,—Received,—Post." But there appeared not to be anything to deliver, nor to receive, nor to send to the post; for each division was as empty as a pauper's stomach. The remaining portion of the shelf was occupied by some few fat octavos bound in dry-looking unornamental calf; while over the fireplace hung the Yorkshire Almanack for the year but one preceding, Skinwell's business not being usually in a sufficiently flourishing condition to allow of the luxury of a clean almanack every twelve months; and even the one which already served to enlighten his office had been purchased at half-price when two months old.

"Do take a seat, Mr. Longstaff!" exclaimed the legal adviser of the village, as he raised his head, and in apparent astonishment, beheld that gentle man still upon his feet, though without reflecting, it would seem, that his request could be much more easily made than complied with, there being not a single accommodation for the weary in his whole office, with the exception of the two high stools occupied respectively by himself and his clerk, and the low one of which Mrs. Clink had already taken possession. Longstaff, however, was soon enabled very kindly to compromise the matter; for while hunting about with his eyes in quest of a supporter of the description mentioned, he beheld in the far corner by the fireplace a few breadths of dealplank fixed on tressels, by way of table, and partially covered with sundry sheets of calf-skin, interspersed with stumps of long-used pens, and crowned with a most business-like, formidable-looking pounce-box. To this quarter he accordingly repaired, and having placed one thigh across the corner of the makeshift table, while he stood plump upright on the other leg, began very seriously to stare into the fire.

Some minutes of profound silence ensued.

The ghostly clerk stopped short in his half-idle labour, as though hesitating what to do, and then made this learned inquiry of his employer,

"Pray, sir, should this parchment be cut?"

"Certainly it should," replied the latter, testily. "Don't you see it's an indenture?—and an indenture is *not* an indenture, and of no force, until it is cut."

The novice accordingly, at a very accelerated speed, proceeded to cut it. Shortly afterwards he again had to trouble his master.

"Should I say '*before said*' or '*above said*'?"

"*Above*, certainly," replied the sage, "*'before said'* means the first thing that ever was written in the world,—before anything else that has ever been written since. Write '*above*,' to be sure."

The clerk wrote "*above*" accordingly, while Longstaff and the lady looked up in admiration of Mr. Skinwell's acuteness, and Skinwell himself looked boldly into the steward's face, with all the brass of a knowing one triumphant in his knowledge.

It will be remembered by the reader, if he have any memory at all, that on the occasion of the birth of our hero Colin, Dr. Rowel expressed to those about him some curiosity respecting the little fellow's father.

Happily, then, for the doctor's satisfaction, he chanced to enter Skinwell's office upon private business of his own, just as the above brief conversation had terminated, and before that examination of Mrs. Clink had commenced, in which a father was legally to be given him. The doctor, then, was upon the point of being gratified from the very best authority.

Having now concluded the writing with which he had been engaged, the joint lawyer and overseer of the parish called to the woman Clink, and bade her stand up and look at him; and, in order to afford her every facility for doing so to the best advantage, he planted both his elbows firmly upon the desk, resting his chin upon both his hands, which stood up against his cheeks in such a manner as to convey to a casual spectator the idea that he was particularly solicitous about a pair of red scanty whiskers, like moles, which grew beneath, and then fixed his eyes in that particular place above the wooden horizon that inclosed him, in which the disc of Mrs. Clink's head now began slowly to appear. As she came gradually and modestly up, she met first the gaze of the lawyer, then of his clerk, then of Dr. Rowel, and then of Mr. Longstaff; so that by the time she was fully risen, four men's faces confronted her at once, and with such familiar earnestness, that, though not apt to be particularly tender-hearted in others' cases, she burst into tears at her own.

"Ay, ay, doctor," sneeringly remarked Skinwell to that worthy professional, "this is just it. They can always cry when it is too late." Then looking fiercely in the downcast countenance of the yet feeble culprit before him, he thus continued his discourse. "Come, come, woman, we can't have any blubbering here—it won't do. Hold your head up."

The surgeon, the steward, the clerk, and the poor brutal wit himself smiled.

"Come, up with it, and let us look at you."

Colin's mother sobbed louder, and, instead of complying with this gratuitously insolent request, turried her face so much lower in the folds of the shawl that covered her neck, and hung down upon her bosom, as to present to the gaze of the inquiring overseer almost a full-moon view of the crown of her bonnet.

"Hum!" growled Skinwell; "like all the rest—not a look to be got at them. Well, now, listen to me, my good woman. You know what you're brought here for? You've got a child, haven't you?"

A long-drawn snuffle from the other side of the partition, which sounded very much like what musicians term a shake, seemed to confess too deeply the painful fact.

"Oh! you have, have you? Very good, very—can't be better.

"Mr. Longstaff's merriment was here evinced by a single explosion of the breath, which would have done much better to blow a lamp out with than to convince anybody that he was pleased. The surgeon did not change countenance while the clerk made three or four discursive flourishes with his pen upon the blotting-paper before him, as much as to say, he would take the propriety of laughing into further consideration. Mr. Skinwell then continued.

"Now, now, woman,—*do* attend to me. It is impossible that my valuable time can be wasted in this manner. Who is that child's father?"

"Yes, yes," echoed Mr. Longstaff, tapping the poor woman in joyful expectation upon the shoulder; "just say the word, and have done with it."

Every eye was fixed on Mrs. Clink. After a brief pause during which the tears yet remaining in her eyes were hastily dried up with the corner of her shawl, she raised her head with a feeling of confidence scarcely to be expected, and directing her eyes through the little palisades which topped the wooden partition full at Mr. Skinwell, she said, in a voice sufficiently loud to be heard by all present,—

"If you please, sir, it is Mr. Longstaff, the steward."

The office was amazed; while Mr. Longstaff himself started up in an attitude of mute astonishment, which Chantrey himself could scarcely have equalled.

"Longstaff, the steward?" ejaculated Skinwell.

"Impossible?" observed Dr. Rowel.

"It's false!" muttered the clerk.

"It is false!" repeated the accused man, in a faint voice. "Why gentlemen,—a man with a wife and family,—in my situation; it's monstrous and diabolical. If I could pull your tongue across your teeth," he continued, turning to Colin's mother, and shaking his fist in her face. "I'd cure it and hang it up, as an eternal example to such arrant liars. You *know* I'm as innocent as a March lamb,—you do, you deceitful woman!"

"But Mrs. Clink persisted in her statement, and avowed her readiness to take her oath upon the fact; so that Mr. Longstaff was obliged to submit with the best or the worst grace he might.

"This small scrap of experience fully convinced him, however, that Squire Lupton's views upon the subject of the forty-third of Elizabeth, which he had formerly opposed, were not perfectly correct in themselves, but that they ought to have been extended much further, and that the exemption of which the squire had spoken, ought to have embraced not only county magistrates, but their stewards also.

How the matter really was, the reader may decide for himself upon the following evidence, which is the best I have to offer him;—that Mr. Longstaff regularly paid the charge of three shillings per week towards the maintenance of that life which I am now writing, and that he failed not to account for it in the squire's books, under the mysterious, though very ministerial, title of "secret service money."

Possibly, however, Mr. Longstaff might economically consider the squire much more capable of paying it than he was himself. Nor, even in case it was so, would he have been the first steward in these latter days, who, for his own use, has kindly condescended to borrow for a brief season his master's money.

CHAPTER III.

Describes the sufferings endured by Mr. Longstaff, in consequence of the diabolical proceedings against him recorded in the last chapter; and also hints at a cowardly piece of revenge which he and his wife planned, in the middle of the night, upon Mrs. Clink and Colin.

Mr. LONGSTAFF returned towards the old house of Kiddal vexed, mortified, and ashamed; and while he mentally vowed never again to undertake a piece of dirty work for the best man living, neither for bribe, nor place, nor the hope of favour, he also as firmly, and in a spirit much

more to be depended upon, determined to pour, to the very last drop, the phials of his wrath upon the devoted head of Colin's mother. "If there be not power in a steward," thought he, "to harass such a poor, helpless, despicable thing as she is, where in the world is it to be found?—and if any steward knows how to do it better than I do, why, I'll give him leave to eat me." With which bold and magnanimous reflection he hustled along the road, almost heedless of the straggling briars which every now and then caught hold of his face or his ankles, and as though fully conscious only of the pleasing fact that every additional step brought him still a step nearer his revenge. Besides this, had the truth been fully known, his feelings of resentment against Mrs. Clink were in no small degree increased by the thoughts that crowded his brain touching the manner in which he should meet "the partner of his joys and woes," Mrs. Æneasina Macleay Longstaff: a lady, as some years of hard experience had taught him, who well merited the title of a woman of spirit, and with whom, in his soul, though he scarcely dare allow himself to believe it, he anticipated no very pleasant encounter.

As for the squire, who naturally enough would wish to know how his steward had sped in the business, Mr. Longstaff did not feel much of the humour of eagerness to visit him, having already about as large a load on his stomach as he could conveniently carry, and being in his own mind fully persuaded that he really should not have a tithe of the requisite courage left to meet Mrs. Longstaff, if he ventured to encounter the jeers of the squire previously. With the view, then, of making the best of his way unobserved down to his own house, he left the high road, and exerted himself in a very unusual manner, to leap half a score hedges and ditches which crossed the bird's-flight path he had taken, and ultimately stole privily down the side of the boundary-wall which inclosed the northern side of the plantations, intending to creep through a small private door, placed there for the convenience of the gamekeepers, which conducted to a path in the immediate direction of his own house. But, notwithstanding all his trouble, fortune again turned her wheel upon Mr. Longstaff: he fell into the very trap that he had taken so much trouble to avoid, and what—to a man already in a state of aggravation—was still worse, he fell into it solely because he had endeavoured to avoid it. Had he taken the common road, he would have arrived at home uninterrupted; as it was, scarcely had he reached within twenty yards of the little door when, to his great alarm, he heard the voice of the squire hailing him from some distance up the fields to the left hand. Mr. Longstaff pushed forwards with increased speed, and without taking more notice of his master's call than if he had not heard it: but ere he could reach the gate of that which had now become as a fortress to him, Mr. Lupton again halloed in a tone which even a deaf man could not, with any show of grace, have denied hearing something of. Longstaff accordingly stopped, and, on turning his head, beheld the squire on horseback beckoning to him with his hand. There was no alternative; and in a few minutes the steward was by his side.

"Well, Longstaff," said he, as he carelessly twirled the lash of his whip upon its stock like a horizontal wheel, "how is it ended? I suppose you have given a son and heir to somebody or other?"

"It has turned out a deal worse job than I expected," dolefully observed the steward.

"Ah!—a bad job is it?"

"Very sir, very!" sighed the unfortunate go-between.

"Why—what—wouldn't she be persuaded, Longstaff?"

"O., yes," replied the steward, with a deep curse on Mrs. Clink, "she took all I was authorized to give her—"

"And gave me the whelp in exchange, eh?" added the squire.

"No, sir, no,"—(he inly wished she had)—"worse than that, sir,—great deal worse."

"Worse!" earnestly exclaimed Mr. Lupton; "that is impossible. Have you got him, then?"

Mr. Longstaff cast his eyes to the ground, arranged the shoe-tie of his left foot with the toe of his right, and with a dolorous face, drawn nearly as long as his own name, faintly drawled out,

"I have, sir!"

Mr. Lupton burst into a fit of laughter, which lasted two whole minutes, blew out his breath in a prolonged whistle, not unlike an autumn blast through an out-door key-hole, and then dashed away, cracking his whip and laughing as long as he could be heard.

"Dang the woman!" exclaimed the steward, as he began to move off the ground homewards, "I'll kick her and her *burn** out of house and home to-night, or may I be——"

Somehow or other, however, he could not screw up sufficient courage to carry him immediately home, and, as it were, into the very jaws of Mrs. *Æneasius* Longstaff. He therefore crossed the corners of two other fields again, on to the high-road, and walked into the Cock and Bottle, the only inn in Bramleigh, with the intention of strengthening his shaken nerves with a respectable potation of brandy and water.

On entering, he thought the landlady—with whom he had always been upon the best of terms, not only because of his situation, but also of his excellent moral character,—looked more than usually distant at him. The landlord, too, cast an eye at him, as much as to say, "I hear, Mr. Longstaff, you have had something unpleasant this morning?" While the maid, who formerly used to smile very prettily whenever he appeared, actually brushed by him as he went down the passage, as though she thought he was a bet or man half a mile off than between two such walls. As he passed the kitchen-door, everybody within turned to look at him; and when he got into the parlour, he beheld four of the village farmers round the table, all of whom were smiling, evidently at something very funny. Mr. Longstaff, by that peculiar instinct which usually attends men in suspicious circumstances, knew, as well as if he had been told, that it was at him. He could not endure the company the house, the landlord, and his wife, nor himself; and, therefore, he marched out again, and homeward, in a state, as may easily be supposed, of more extraordinary preparation for meeting his lady, than if he had thrice over fulfilled his intention of imbibing at the Cock and Bottle some two or three glasses of aqua vite. The truth was, he had by this time, like a bull with running about, grown very desperate; and, for the moment, he cared no more about the temper of Mrs. *Æneasius* Longstaff than he cared for the wind that blew around him.

And well it was for the steward that he did not. Everybody of experience knows that the worst news invariably flies the fastest; and, in the present case, the result of the examination in Mr. Skinwell's office, which

* A common Yorkshire corruption of the Scottish *bairn*.

has already been described, was made known to poor unhappy Mrs. Longstaff, through such a rapid chain of communication as nearly equalled the transmission of a government despatch by telegraph. By the time her husband arrived at home, then, she was, as a necessary consequence, not only filled with grief at the discovery that had been made, but also was more than filled, — she was absolutely overflowing — with feelings of jealous rage against the faithless barbarian, with whom, as she then thought, the most perverse destiny had united her. Every moment of cessation in the paroxysms of her grief was mentally employed in preparing a very pretty rod in pickle for him : with Cleopatra, she could have whipped him with wire first, and stewed him in brine afterwards ; or she could, with the highest satisfaction, have done any other thing which the imagination most fertile in painful inventions might have suggested.

All this latent indignation, however, Mr. Longstaff braved. He did not relish the undertaking, to be sure ; but then, inly conscious of his own blamelessness, he concluded that, provided he could only get the first word with her, the storm might be blown aside. But, alas ! he could not get the first word, although he had it on his lips as he entered the door. Mrs. L. attacked him before he came in sight ; and, in all probability, such an oratorical display of all the deprecatory figures of speech, — such disparagements, and condemnations, and denunciations ; such hatreds, and desirings, and contempts, and upbraidings, were never before, throughout the whole range of domestic disturbances, collected together within so brief a space of time. In fact, such an arrowy sleet of words was rained upon the unlucky steward, and so suddenly, that, without having been able to force in a single opposing syllable between them, he was at last compelled, after the royal example of some of our too closely besieged emperors and kings, to make good his retreat at the rear of the premises.

According to the good old custom in cases of this kind, it is highly probable that Mr. and Mrs. Longstaff would that night have done themselves the pleasure of retiring to rest in most peaceable dumbshow, if not, indeed, the additional felicity of sleeping in separate beds, out of the very praiseworthy desire of mutual revenge, had it not so fallen out, — and naturally enough, considering what had happened, — that Mr. Longstaff, contrary to his usual habit, consoled himself as well as he was able, by staying away from home until very late in the evening, so late indeed, that, as Mrs. Longstaff cooled, she really began to entertain very serious fears whether she had not carried matters rather too far ; and, perhaps, — for the thing did not to her half-repent mind, appear impossible, — had driven her husband, in a moment of desperation, to make away with himself. Hour after hour passed on ; and the time thus allowed her for better reflection, was not altogether ill-spent. She began to consider the many chances there were of great exaggeration in the report that had been brought to her ; the fondness of human kind in general to deal in atrocities, even though one half of them be self-invented ; the great improbability of Mr. Longstaff's having really compromised his character in the manner which it was currently related he had ; and, above all, the very possible contingency that, as in many other the like cases open perjury had been committed. Under any circumstances she now felt conscious that she had too suddenly allowed her feelings of jealousy to run riot upon the doubtful evidence of a piece of scandal, probably

originating in malice, as it certainly had been repeated with secret gratification.

These reflections had prepared her to hear in a proper spirit a quiet explanation of the whole transaction from the mouth of Mr. Longstaff himself; when, much to her private satisfaction, he returned home not long afterwards.

That gentleman had already commanded a candle to be brought him, and was about to steer off to his chamber without exchanging a word, when some casual observation, dropped in an unexpectedly kind tone by his good lady, arrested his progress, and induced him to sit down in a chair about the same spot where he chanced to be standing. By and by he edged round to the fire; and, shortly afterwards, at her especial suggestion, he consented—much to his inward gratification—to take a little supper. This led to a kind of tacitly understood reconciliation; so that, eventually, the same subject which had caused so much difference in the afternoon, was reintroduced and discussed in a manner truly dove-like and amiable. Mrs. Longstaff felt perfectly satisfied with the explanation given by her husband, that he had undertaken the negotiation with Mrs. Clink solely to oblige the squire; and that, that infamous woman had attributed her disaster to him merely out of a spirit of annoyance and revenge, for which he expressed himself perfectly unable to account.

But the steward's wife was gratified most to hear his threats of retaliation upon the little hero of our story and his mother. In these she joined with a degree of cordiality quite unprecedented, with respect to the projects and speculations usually emanating from her husband; still farther urging him on to their immediate fulfilment with so much energy of tongue, that by the time he had taken his usual nightly allowance of punch, he found himself in particularly high condition, late as was the hour, for the instant execution of his cowardly and cruel enterprise.

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Longstaff gets fuddled, and revenges himself upon Mrs. Clink: together with some excellent discourse of his while in that pleasing condition. The mother of our hero partially discloses a secret which the reader has been anxious to know ever since he commenced this history.

WHILE things were thus progressing elsewhere, the poor and destitute, though erring creature, over whose head the rod of petty tyranny now hung so threateningly, had passed a solitary evening by the side of her small fire, unnoticed even by the neighbours humble as herself; for adversity, though it is said to make men friends, yet renders them selfish also, and leaves in their bosoms but few feelings of charity for others.

Little Fanny, transformed into a miniature washerwoman, and elevated on two or three lumps of Yorkshire stone to lengthen her out, had been employed since nightfall, by the hazy light of a candle scarcely thicker than her own little finger, in washing some few things for the baby, in a small earthenware bowl, which served, as occasion might require, either in its present capacity, or to bake a pie, a loaf, or a pudding: while young Colin himself, held up in his mother's arms, with his face pressed close to her bosom, was silently engaged in fulfilling, as Voltaire has it, one of the most abstruse laws of natural philosophy.

Having at length resolved this problem perfectly to his satisfaction, Master Colin betook himself, with the utmost complacency, to sleep, just as though his mother had had no trouble whatever in the world with him; or, as though Mr. Longstaff the steward, had been fast asleep in bed, dreaming of felled timbers and, unpaid arrears, and utterly regardless of Colin's new existence, and of his mother's crime. Instead of preparing, as he was—ultimately and heartlessly—to disturb that baby slumber, and to harass with additional pains and fears the bosom of one who had already found too abundantly that vice meets its own punishment.

The child had been already placed in the cradle, and little Fanny had taken her seat on a small stool in the chimney-corner, with her supper in her hand, consisting of a basin of milk and water, thickened with three cold potatoes; while the mother sat before the fire, alternately knitting a ball of black worsted on the floor into a stocking, and giving the cradle an additional push, as the impetus it had previously received died away and left it again almost at rest. Everything was silent, save one or two of those quiet homely sounds, which fall on the ear with a sensation that appears to render even silence itself still more silent. The solitary ticking of an old caseless Dutch clock on the wall was interrupted only by the smothered rocking of the cradle, wherein lay the yet unconscious cause of all I have told, or may yet have to tell. As hand or foot was applied to keep it in motion, the little charge within was tossed alternately against each blanket side of his wooden prison, and jolted into the utterance, every now and then, of some light sound of complaint, which as instantly sunk again to nothing as the rocking was increased, and the mother's low voice cried,

"Hush, child! peace, peace! Sleep, barn, sleep!"

And then rounded off into a momentary chant of the old ditty, beginning:

"There was an old woman, good lack! good lack!"

But out of doors, as the rustic village had long ago been gone to rest, everything was as silent as though the country had been depopulated.

Fatigued by the long day's exertion, Fanny had fallen asleep, with half her supper uneaten in her lap; and Mistress Clink, unconsciously overtaken in a similar manner, had instinctively covered her face with her hand, and fallen into that imperfect state of rest in which reality and dreamy fictions are fused together like things perfectly akin,—when the sound of visionary tongues seemed to be about her.

"Go straight in," said one. "Don't stand knocking."

"Perhaps she's a-bed," observed another.

"Then drag her out again, that's all!" replied the same that had first spoken: "I've sworn to kick her and her young 'un into th' street to-night, and the devil's in it if I don't, dark as it is. It will not be the first time she's lay i' th' hedge-bottom till daylight, I'll swear."

She started up, terrified. The door was pushed violently open, and the village constable, an assistant, and Mr. Longstaff, the steward,—in a state of considerable mental elevation, arising from the combination of punch and revenge,—stood in the middle of the room.

"Now, missis!" bawled the steward, advancing, and clenching his fist before his own face, while he stared at her through a pair of lenden eyes, with much of the expression of an owl in the sun; "You see me, don't you? you see me I say? Mark that. Did you expect me, I say,

missis? No, no, I think not. You thought you were safe enough, but I've got you! I've got you, I tell you, as sure as a gun; and now I'm going to learn you how to put your whelps down i' th' parish books on my account; I am, my lady. I'll teach you how to touch a steward again, you may 'pend on't!"

"Oh, sir!" began Mrs. Clink imploringly, but she was instantly stopped by Mr. Longstaff.

"Ay, ay,—you may *oh, sir!* as long as you like, but I'm not to be *oh, sir'd*, that way. Do you know aught about rent?—rent, I say—rent? last year?—t'other hous?—d'ye know you hav'nt paid it? or are you going to swear *that* to me, an' all?—'Cause, if you are, I wish you may die in a ditch, and your baby under you! Now, look you, I'm going to show you a pretty trick—about as pretty, *missis*, as you showed me this morning. What d'ye think of that, now, for a change? How d'ye like that, eh? I am going to seize on you——"

No sooner did Mrs. Clink hear these words really from the mouth of the intoxicated Mr. Longstaff, than she screamed, and fell on her knees; crying out in broken exclamations,

"Oh, not to-night, sir—not to-night! To-morrow, if you please, sir,—to-morrow—to-morrow!"

But, though joined in this petition by the tears of little Fanny, and the unintentional pleadings of Colin, who now was screaming lustily in his cradle; the steward disregarded all, until, finding prayers and entreaties vain, the voice of the woman sunk into suppressed sobbings, or was only heard to utter repeatedly,

"What *will* become of my poor baby!"

"Become of him?" exclaimed Longstaff, turning towards her as she yet remained on her knees on the ground. "Why,—take and throw him into th' horsepond,—that's my advice. He'll never be good for aught in this world but to hang on th' work'us, and pull money out of other people's pockets. Go on, Bill; go on, my lad;—put 'em all down, stick and stone; and away with 'em all to-night. There shan't be a single thing of any sort left in this house, for th' sun to shine on to-morrow morning."

The excitement produced by Mr. Longstaff's discourse upon his own stomach and brain had the effect of rendering him, in this brief period of time, apparently much more intoxicated than he was on first entering the cottage, and he now sunk heavily upon a chair, as though almost unable to remain upon his feet any longer.

"Have you put this chair down, Bill?" he asked, at the same time tapping with his fingers the back of that upon which he was sitting, by way of drawing attention to it.

The constable answered in the affirmative.

"That's right, my boy,—that's right. And that clock, there,—have you got him? Bless his old pendulum! we'll stop his ticking very soon:—we'll show him what o'clock it is,—won't we, *missis*?"

But this facetiousness passed unheeded by the poor woman to whom it was addressed, unless one look of reproachful scorn, which she cast in the stupid face of the steward, might be considered as an answer to it.

"Why, you're looking quite pretty to-night, *Miss Clink*," said Mr. Longstaff, in a more subdued tone; "I don't wonder—though he is married, and all that sort of thing,—I don't wonder at the squire, if he did patronise you a little."

The cheeks of our hero's mother blushed scarlet with indignation. She rose from the cradle side, on which she had been sitting, and with an evident struggle so to overcome the sobs that were rising in her throat as to enable her to speak distinctly, she stood up before the astonished steward, displaying a countenance and figure that would have graced many a far fairer place than that, and thus addressed him:—

"I'm a poor helpless woman, Mr. Longstaff, and you know it; but such men as you are always cowards. You may rob me of my few goods; you may destroy my home, though it is almost too poor to be worth the trouble; you may turn me out of my house, with that baby, without a roof to put my head under, because you have power to do it, and no generosity left in you. But, I say, he is a mean contemptible man,—whether it be you, or whether it be any one else,—who can offer to insult me, bad as I am, besides. 'I'll bear anything but that; and that I won't bear from any man. *Especially*—" and she laid strong emphasis on her words, and pointed her finger emphatically to the person she addressed.

"—Especially from such a man as you: for you know, as true as I speak these words, that if it had not been for you and your wife—"

Longstaff began to lose his colour somewhat rapidly, and to look half a dozen degrees more sober.

"—Yes, I repeat it,—you, and your wife, that child would never have been born, and I should yet have been what now I can never be again. And yet you'll be revenged on me—" she continued, growing more passionate as she proceeded.—"you have courage enough to set your foot on such a hovel as this, because it shelters me, and crush it. But, take care: there's a sting in that cradle for you, yet. And, though I told *one* lie about him, don't forget that if you, and your wife, and your master, had not told a thousand lies before, there would have been no occasion for me to tell one at all!"

It was clear beyond dispute, from Mr. Longstaff's manner, that he had drawn down upon himself a retort which he never intended—especially in the presence of two other persons. He leaned half over his chair-back, with his dull eyes fixed, though evidently in utter absence of mind, upon the ceiling; while a visible nervous quivering of his pale lips and nostrils evinced the working of inward emotions, to which his tongue either could not, or dared not give utterance.

Meantime, Mrs. Clink had taken little Colin out of his cradle, and wrapped him warmly round with all the clothes it contained. She then led Faamy into the inner room, which was occupied as a bed-chamber.

"Come, Faamy," said she; "if there be still less charity under a bare sky than under this stripped roof, we cannot do much worse. Put on all the clothes you have, child, for perhaps we may want them before morning."

And then she proceeded to select from her scanty stored drawers such few trifles as she wished to retain; and afterwards, in accordance with her own injunction, dressed herself as if for a long night-journey.

"Come, lads," at length remarked Mr. Longstaff, after a long silence—"hav'n't you done yet? You musn't take any notice of this woman, mind:—she's had her liquor, and hardly knows what she's talking about."

"Won't to-morrow do, sir, to finish off with?" asked the holder of

the distress-warrant: and at the same moment our hero's mother, with Colin in her arms, and Fanny by her side, passed out of the doorway of the inner room. Mr. Longstaff looked up, and, seeing them prepared for leaving the place, he observed, in a tone very different to that in which he had before spoken.

"We shall not remove anything now; so you may stay to-night, if you like."

"No, sir," replied Mrs. Clink: "your master's charity is quite enough: I want none of yours. But, before I go, let me tell you I know that Mr. Lupton has never sanctioned this."

Here again was something which appeared to throw another new light upon the steward's mind: for, in reality, his passion had not allowed him for a moment to consider what might be the squire's opinion about such an off-handed and barbarous proceeding. He began to feel some misgivings as to the consequences of his own act, and eventually even went so far as to request that Mrs. Clink would remain in the house until the morrow, when something more could be seen about it.

"No," said she again firmly, "whatever I may be now, I was not born to be blown about by every fool's breath that might come across me. Once done is not undone. Come, Fanny."

And, in another minute, Mr. Longstaff, Bill the constable, and his assistant, were the only living creatures beneath that roof, which an hour before, with all its poverty, had seemed to offer as secure a home, as inviolable a hearthstone, as the castle of the best lordling in the kingdom.

CHAPTER V.

Introduces to the reader two new characters of considerable importance, and describes a scene between them to which a very peculiar interest is attached.

AMONGST all those who were most materially concerned in the circumstances detailed in the preceding chapters, I must now name one person who has hitherto only been once passingly alluded to in the most brief manner, but whose happiness was (if not more) at least as deeply involved in the events which had taken place as was that of any other individual whatever, not excepting even our hero's mother herself. That person—for Mr. Longstaff has already hinted that his master was married—was Squire Lupton's wife.

Should the acute reader's moral or religious sensibilities be shocked at the discovery of so much human depravity and turpitude, as this avowal must necessarily uncertain to him, it is to be hoped he will lay the blame thereof upon the right shoulders, and not rashly attack the compiler of this history, who does only as Josephus, Tacitus, and other great historians of the earth have done before him—make use of the materials which other men's actions prepare ready to his hands, and with the good or evil of which he himself is no more chargeable, than is the obedient workman who mouldeth a pot with clay of the quality which his master may please to put before him.

At the same time he will allow himself free to confess, that speaking with all the candour which confidence in the reader's trustworthiness can inspire, he himself is not the least astonished at the heinousness of Mr. Lupton's sins, seeing that every year's experience furnishes the world with numerous additional instances of a similar kind.

During a period of some weeks prior to the time at which our story commences, Mrs. Lupton had been upon a visit to the family of Mr. Shirley, a resident in York, with whom she was intimately acquainted previously to her marriage with the heir of Kiddal House. Owing, however, to circumstances of a family nature, with which she had early become acquainted after her destiny had been for ever united with that of Mr. Lupton, she had hitherto found it impossible to introduce to her own house, with any degree of pleasure to herself, even the dearest companions of her youth; and no one was more so, for they had known each other from girlhood, than Miss Mary Shirley, the only daughter of her esteemed friend. Like many others in similar circumstances, she long strove to hide her own unhappiness from the world; but, in doing so, had been too often compelled to violate the cherished feelings of her bosom, and—when at home—had chosen to remain like a recluse in her own house, when else she would gladly have had some one with whom to commune when grief was upon her mind; and he who had sworn at the altar of God to be all in all to her, was in reality the cause, instead of the allayer, of her sorrows.

On the afternoon when those events took place which had been chronicled in the last chapter, Mrs. Lupton returned to Kiddal, accompanied, for the first time, by Miss Mary Shirley.

"Here we are at last," remarked the lady of the house, as they drove up to the gate, and the highly ornamented oaken gable-ends of the old hall became visible above the garden walls. "I have not a very merry home to bring you to, Miss Shirley, and I dare not promise how long you may like to stay with us; but I hope you will enjoy yourself as well as you can; and when that is over—though I could wish to keep you with me till I die—when the time comes that you can be happy here no longer, then, my dear Mary, you must not consider me;—leave me again alone, for I shall not dare to ask you to sacrifice another hour on my poor account, in a place so infinitely below the happy little home we have left in yonder city."

"Nay, replied the young lady, endeavouring to hide some slight feelings of emotion, "you cannot forebode unhappiness here. In such a place as this, these antique rooms, these gardens, and with such a glorious landscape of farms and hamlets, as lies below this hill, farther than eye can reach—it is impossible to be otherwise than happy."

"Ay, and so I said," replied Mrs. Lupton, "when Walter first brought me here; and so he told me too, as we passed under this very gateway. But I have learned since then that such things have no pleasure in them, when those we love and with whom we live are not that to us which they ought to be."

Miss Shirley remained silent, for she feared to prolong a conversation which, at its very commencement, seemed to recall to the mind of her entertainer and friend such painful reminiscences.

On their introduction to the hall, Miss Shirley could not fail to remark the cold, unimpassioned, and formal manner in which Mr. Lupton received his lady, while towards herself he evinced so much affability and kindness, that the degradation of the wife was for the moment rendered still more striking and painful by the contrast. But, out of respect for the feelings of her friend, she affected not to notice it; although it was not without difficulty that she avoided betraying herself, when she observed Mrs. Lupton suddenly retire to another part of the room; be-

cause she was unable any longer to restrain the tears which now burst in the bitterness of uncomplaining silence, from her eyes.

Perhaps no feelings of mortification could readily be imagined more acute than were those which arose from this slight incident in the bosom of a sensible, a sensitive, and, I may add, a beautiful woman, too,—for such Mrs. Lupton undoubtedly was. To be thus slighted when alone, she had already learned to bear; but to be so slighted, for the first time, and, as if by a studied refinement of contempt, before another individual, and that individual a woman to whom extraordinary attentions were at the same moment paid, was indeed more than she could well endure; though pride, and the more worthy feelings of self-respect, would not allow her openly to confess it. But while the throbbings of her bosom could scarcely be repressed from becoming audible, and the tears welled up in her large blue eyes until she could not see distinctly for the space of half a minute together, she yet stood at one of the high-pointed windows of the antique room, and affected to be beckoning to one of the gallant peacocks on the grass before her, as he stretched his brilliant neck towards the window, in anticipation of that food, which from the same fair hand was seldom expected in vain.

In the meantime, seated at the farther end of the room Mr. Lupton was endeavouring, though, after what had occurred, with but ill success, to engage the whole attention of the young lady who sat beside him. They had met some twelve months before at the house of her father, in York, during the time that he was paying his addresses to her friend, Miss Bernard, now his wife, and some short period before their ill-fated marriage.

After inquiring with great particularity after the health of her family and relatives, and expressing the very high pleasure he felt in having the daughter of one of his most esteemed friends an inmate of his house, the squire proceeded to descant in very agreeable language upon the particular beauties of the situation and neighbourhood of his house, and to enlarge upon the many pleasures which Miss Shirley might enjoy there during the ensuing summer.—a period over which, he fully trusted, she would do himself and Mrs. Lupton the honour and pleasure of her company.

“But shall we not ask Mrs. Lupton to join us?” remarked Miss Shirley. “It is unfair that we should have all this conversation to ourselves. I see she is at the window still;—though I remember the time, sir,” she added, dropping her voice to a more sedate tone, and looking archly in his face, “when there would have been no occasion, while you were in the room, for another person to have made such a request.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Mr. Lupton, “she is happy enough with those birds about her. She and they are old friends, and it is now sometime since they saw each other. Shall I have the pleasure of conducting you over the gardens, Miss Shirley?”

“I thank you,” replied she, — “if Mrs. Lupton will accompany us.”

“She cannot be better employed,” rejoined the squire, “nor, very probably, more to her own satisfaction than she is.”

“But shall we not know that best on inquiry?” rejoined the young lady, as she rose from her seat, and, without farther parley, bounded across the room towards the object of their discourse.

A brief conversation carried on in a subdued tone of voice, ensued,

during which Miss Shirley took a seat by the window, and appeared to sink into a more pensive mood, as though the contagion of unhappiness had communicated itself to her from the unfortunate lady with whom she had been speaking. The proposed walk in the gardens was eventually declined : and shortly afterward Mrs. Lupton and her friend retired to their private apartment.

"In this passage," remarked the lady of the house, as they passed along towards the great oaken staircase, "under these stones," and she slightly tapped the pavement on which they stood with her foot, "lie buried all the family of the Luptons during the last three or four hundred years."

"What! in the house?" exclaimed Miss Shirley.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Lupton, "directly beneath our feet. Old as this building is, not a single funeral ever passed from its gates; and if you observe the injunction of the pious founder of the building, you will wish peace to the bones that lie here."

"That I shall very sincerely, for my own sake," interrupted Miss Shirley. "What a horrible conceit it is to have graves under the house-floor!"

"When we walk out," continued Mrs. Lupton, "you will see upon that projecting part of the great hall where the stained windows are, a long inscription, carved in stone, just under the parapet, with the date of 1503 upon it, asking everybody to pray for the souls of Roger Lupton and of Sibylla his wife, whom God preserve! I hope," pursued Mrs. Lupton, "they will never think of burying *me* here. Not that I dislike the place itself so much, nor the custom either; but then, to think that I should lie here, and that my spirit might see the trailing silks that would pass above my face, and unhallowed dames stepping lightly in the place where an honest wife had been a burthen,—and to hear their revelry and their false laughter of a night! O, Mary! I should get out of my coffin and knock against these stones till I frightened the very hearts out of them. I should haunt this house day and night, till not a woman dare inhabit it."

"Nay," ejaculated Miss Shirley, "you will frighten me, before all this happens, till I shall not sleep a wink. Let us go up stairs."

"But wherefore frighten *you*?" asked Mrs. Lupton, pertinaciously taking her stand upon the identical stone below which, though all were without mark of any kind, it was known lay old Roger himself,—“why, Mary, should you fear? You would not flaunt over me if I did lie here,—you would not sit in my chair, and simper at my husband: I say it touches not you. I should not have your heels upon my face, whoever else might be there; for your mother never bore you to idle wanton hours with a mock widower, while your old friend, his honest hated wife, lay fresh under the floor of the next corridor. Leave those to fear who have need;—but for you—no man can touch those cheeks till he has seen the altar, and had Heaven's approval."

Mrs. Lupton's manner, as well as language, so alarmed the young lady, that she trembled violently, and burst into tears. Her friend, however, did not seem to observe it; for it was just at that time of the evening when, in such a place, the turn of darkness obliterates the individual features of things, and leaves only a shadowy phantom of their general appearance. She then resumed:

"And, not that alone. There is another reason why I would not be

buried *here*." The sound of her foot upon the pavement made the gallery ring again. "Though I have been wed, it has not made me one of this family; and you have seen and known to-day that, though I am the poor lady of this house, I am still a stranger. In two months more that man will have quite forgotten me; and, if I remember myself to the end, why, I shall thank him, dear heart, I shall. But *you* are beautiful, Mary; and to paint such as you the memory is an excellent artist. *I* saw—oh! take care, my girl. There is bad in the best of men; but the worst of them may make a woman's life not worth the keeping, within the ticking of five minutes. When *we* go out we will walk in the gardens together. Now we will go up stairs."

And, so saying, she clasped Miss Shirley by the wrist, much more forcibly than the occasion rendered needful, and hurried her, notwithstanding her fears, to her own dressing-room. When both had entered she closed the door, and locked it,—an action which, under present circumstances, threw her visiter into a state of agitation, which she could hardly conceal; though, while she strove to maintain an appearance of confident indifference, she took the precaution of placing herself so as to command the bell-rope in case—(for the horrible possibility did come over her mind)—it might be needful for her, though at the instant she knew not why, to summon assistance.

Though, as I have before hinted, the first shadows of night had fallen on the surrounding lower grounds and valleys, and already hidden the ill-lighted corridors and rooms on the eastern side of the hall in a kind of visible darkness, a dull reflection of red light from the western sky still partially illuminated the upper portion of the room in which the two ladies now were; sufficiently so, indeed, to enable them perfectly to distinguish each other; a circumstance which, however slight in itself, enabled Miss Shirley to keep up her courage much better than otherwise she would have been able to do.

Having, as before observed, turned the key in the lock, Mrs. Lupton walked on tip-toe, as though afraid of being overheard, towards her visiter, and began to whisper to her, very cautiously, as follows:—

"I have brought you here, Mary, to tell you something that I have heard since we came back to-day. But, my dear, it has confused my mind till I forget what I am saying. You will forgive me, won't you?"

Her companion begged her to defer it until another time, and not to trouble herself by trying to remember it; but Mrs. Lupton interrupted her with a laugh.

"The pain is not because I forget it, but because I can do nothing but remember it. I cannot be quit of it. It haunts me everywhere I go; for, do you know, Mary, Walter Lupton grows worse and worse. I can never live under it; I know I cannot! And, as for beds, you and I will sleep in this next chamber, so that if there be women's feet in the night, we shall overhear it all. Now, keep awake, Mary, for sleep is of no use at all to me: and, besides that, she told me that the baby was as like her master, as snow to the clouds; so that what is to become of me I do not know,—I cannot tell, indeed!"

Here the unfortunate woman wrung her hands, and wept bitterly.

Miss Shirley grew terrified at this incoherent discourse, and with an unconscious degree of earnestness begged her to go down stairs.

"Never heed,—never heed," said she, turning towards the table, and

apparently forgetting her grief. "There will come an end. Days do not last for ever, nor nights either."

"Do not sigh so deeply," observed her companion. "I have heard say it wears the heart out, though that is idle."

"Nay,—nay," replied Mrs. Lupton, "the woman that first said that spoke fair, for she had a bad husband. It wears mine out, truly; though not too soon for him. You know now that he cares nothing for me."

"But, let us hope it is not so," replied Miss Shirley, somewhat reassured from the more sane discourse of her entertainer.

"And yet," continued Mrs. Lupton, as though unconscious of the last remark, "I have striven to commend myself to him as my best abilities would enable me. Mary, turn the glass to me. It is almost dark. How is this bodice? Is the unlaced shape of a country girl more handsome than the turn of this?"

"Oh, no—no—no!" answered the young lady, "nothing could be more handsome."

"Nay," protested Mrs. Lupton, "it is not what you think, or what I think; but what eyes do the men see with? Does it sit ungracefully on me?"

Indeed, dear lady, I heard my father say that one like you he never saw—"

"Do not tell me—do not tell me!" she exclaimed emphatically; "it is nothing to me, so that he who ought to say everything, says not one word that I please him."

And again she burst into a flood of hysterical tears, beyond the power of the failing judgment to control.

"Come," at length observed Miss Shirley, "it is too dark to see any longer here. Look, the little lights are beginning to shine in the cottage-windows yonder: let us go below. I dare say those poor labourers are making themselves as happy by their firesides as little kings; and why should not we, who have a thousand times more to be happy with, endeavour to do at least as much?"

"Why not?" repeated Mrs. Lupton. "you ask why not? Ay, why not, indeed? Let me see. Well, I do not know just now. This trouble keeps me from considering; or else I could answer you any question in the world; for my education was excellent; and ever since I was married, I have sat in the library day and night, because Mr. Lupton did not speak to me. Now Mary you go down stairs, and take supper; but I shall stay here to watch; and if that child comes here, if he should come to make me more and more ashamed, I will stamp my foot upon him, and crush him out; and then I will put him for the carrion-crows on the turret top!"

"But, you said before," observed Miss Shirley, "that you and I should always go together."

"Oh!—yes,—so I did, truly. I had forgotten that, too! My memory is good for nothing: an hour's lease of it is not worth a loose feather. To be sure, Mary, I will go down with you. There is danger in waiting for all of us; and if your father should find you harmed under my care, he would never—never forgive me!"

So saying, she rose and took her visitor by the hand, unlocked the door, and resisting every proposal to call for a lamp, groped her way down stairs in utter darkness.

Although as might naturally be expected, the alarm experienced by

Miss Shirley under the circumstances above related was very great, yet far deeper was her grief on being thus unexpectedly made aware for the first time that some additional unanticipated cause of sorrow (communicated most probably to her friend in a very incautious manner by some forward ignorant menial of the house,) had had the appalling effect,—if for no long period, at least for the moment,—of impairing her senses to a very painful degree. What the real cause of that sorrow might be,—evident as it is to the kind reader who has accompanied me thus far,—Miss Shirley could not fully comprehend, from the broken exclamations and the incoherent discourse of Mrs. Lupton: though enough had been conveyed, even in that manner, to give her the right end of a thread, the substance of which, however, she was left to spin out from conjecture and imagination. She felt extremely irresolute, too, as to the peculiar course most proper to be adopted by herself: for though she had left her home with the intention of staying at Kiddal during a period of at least some weeks, the impropriety of remaining under the circumstances that had taken place, impressed itself somewhat strongly upon her mind. It might be that Mr. Lupton would secretly regard her as a kind of familiar spy upon his conduct and actions, and as one who might possibly report to the world those deeds of his life which he himself wished to lie buried, like the bones of his ancestors, within the same walls that saw their birth. Or, in case these conjectures were utterly groundless, it yet remained to be decided how far her conduct might be considered prudent and becoming, if she continued to tarry at the residence of a gentleman of Mr. Lupton's character, while his wife,—for thus, very possibly, it might happen,—was confined to her chamber in consequence of either bodily or mental afflictions. These and similar considerations doubtfully occupied her mind during the whole evening; but at length the ties of friendship and of feminine pity prevailed over all objections. She felt it to be impossible to leave the once happy companion of her girlish days in such a fearful condition as this; and inwardly resolved, in case of Mrs. Lupton's increased indisposition, to request permission of the squire that she might be allowed to send for her mother from York, to keep her company.

With these thoughts revolving in her mind much more rapidly than the time it had occupied the reader to become acquainted with them, Miss Shirley, followed by Mrs. Lupton, entered a side-room adjoining the great banquetting hall, wainscotted from roof to ceiling with oak, now almost black with age, and amply filled throughout with ponderous antique furniture in corresponding taste. An old carved arm chair, backed and cushioned with crimson velvet, stood on the farther side of the fire-place; and as it fitfully caught the glimmering of occasional momentary flames, stood out with peculiar though only instantaneous distinctness, from the deep back ground of oaken panels, ample curtains, and dimly visible mirrors, beyond. On this seat—her favourite place—Mrs. Lupton threw herself; while Mary Shirley—as though anxious to evince still more attention to her in proportion as she failed to receive it from others,—seated herself, with her left arm laid upon the lap of her friend, on a low ottoman by her side.

As the lady of the mansion persisted in refusing that lamps should be brought, the apartment remained shrouded in that peculiarly illuminated gloom, which, to some temperaments, is the very beautiful of all imaginable degrees of light, and which gives to even the most ordinary scenes all

the fullness and rich beauty of a masterpiece from the hand of Rembrandt. The ladies had been seated, as I have described, scarcely longer than some few minutes, and had not yet exchanged a word with each other, when the door of the apartment slowly opened, and the squire himself entered.—Fearful of the consequences of an interview at this particular time, between that gentleman and his unhappy wife, Miss Shirley hastily rose as he entered, and, advancing towards him before he could open his lips to address them, requested in a whisper that he would not heed anything Mrs. Lupton might say, lest his replies should still farther excite her, as she certainly had not the proper command of her senses some short time ago; and the least irritation might, she dreaded, render her still worse. The squire expressed a great deal of astonishment and concern, though not, it is to be supposed, very deeply felt, as he took a seat somewhat in the darkness beyond the table.

"Who is that man?" asked Mrs. Lupton, in a voice just audible, as she bent down to Miss Shirley, in order to prevent her question being overheard.

"My dear, you know him well enough, though you cannot see him in this light—it is your husband, Mr. Lupton."

"No, no!" she exclaimed in a loud voice, and with a penetrating look at the indistinct figure beyond the table; "he cannot be come back again! I always feared what judgment he would come to, in spite of all my prayers for him; and to-night I saw a foul fiend carry his ghost away. You are not he, are you?"

"Be assured I am, indeed, dear wife," said the squire rising from his chair, and advancing towards her; "you know me now. Give me your hand."

"If you be a gentleman, sir, leave me. The manners of this house have been corrupted so, that even strangers come here to insult me. Send him out, Mary; call William. I won't have men coming here, as though we were all disciples in the same school."

Mr. Lupton began to act upon the hint previously given by his fair visitor, by leaving his seat and retreating towards the door:—

"Yes, sir," continued his wife, "begone! for, as the sun shines in the daytime, and the moon by night, Mary, so I shall be to the end; and never wed again—never again—never! Hark! I heard the rustling of a gown below that window. They are coming!" and she held up her hand in an attitude bidding silence, and listened. The dull roaring of the wind in the chimney-top, and the creak of the door-latch as Mr. Lupton closed it after him, were alone audible to the young lady whom she addressed.

"Stay?" continued Mrs. Lupton, "perhaps his mother is bringing him home."

Her voice was at that instant interrupted by the unequivocal and distinct cry of a babe, uttered apparently within a very few yards of them.

"It is he!" shrieked the lady, as she strove by one energetic and convulsive spring to reach the window; but nature, overstrained so long, now failed her, and she fell like a stone, insensible, on the ground. Miss Shirley had started to her feet with terror, on hearing the first sound of that little living thing, which seemed to be close upon them in the room, or hidden behind the oaken panels of the wainscot; but before she could recover breath to raise an alarm, several of the domestics

of the house rushed into the room; and seeing the situation of their mistress, raised her up, and by the direction of the squire, conveyed, her up-stairs to her own apartment. While this was going on, others, at the bidding of Miss Shirley, examined both the room itself, and the outside of the premises; but as nothing could be seen, or even heard again, it was concluded either that the ladies had been deceived, or that the ghost of some buried ancestor from the corridor had adopted this strange method of terrifying the present master of Kiddal into better morals. The logic, however, of this argument did not agree with Miss Shirley's conceptions; since, in that case, the squire, and not his lady, would have been the proper person for the ghost of his grandmother to appeal to.

The messenger who, meanwhile, had been despatched into the village of Bramleigh to summon Dr. Rowell to the assistance of his mistress, returned with another conjectural interpretation of the affair. He had passed on the road a pedlar woman, with a little girl by her side, and a child wrapped up in her arms: was it not possible that she had been lurking about the house for reasons best known to herself, until the crying of her child obliged her to decamp, through fear of being detected? The doctor declared it must have been so, as a matter of course; but the maids, who had other thoughts in their heads, resolved, for that night at least, to huddle themselves, for reciprocal security, all in one room together.

CHAPTER VI.

Explains the last-recorded occurrence, and introduces Mistress Clink to an individual whom she little expected to see. Scene in a hedge pothouse, with a company of poachers. They are surprised by very unwelcome visitors. A terrible conflict ensues, and its consequences described.

At the time when Mrs. Clink, with little Fanny by her side, and Colin snugly wrapped up, like a field-mouse in its winter's nest, in her arms, was driven away from her humble home, as related in the fourth chapter, and forced to seek a retreat for the night wherever chance or Providence might direct her, the hand of Bramleigh church clock pointed nigh upon eleven. By and by she heard the monotonous bell toll, with a startling sound, over the deserted fields and the sleeping village; while she, divided between the stern resolution of an unconquered spirit, and the yearnings of Nature to provide a pillow for the heads of the two helpless creatures who could call no other soul but her their friend, paced the road which led towards the highway from York to Leeds, in painful irresolution as to the course most proper to pursue. To solicit the charity of a night's protection from any of the villagers with whom she was acquainted, appeared at once almost hopeless in itself, and beneath the station which, however criminally, she had once held amongst them, when her word of praise or of blame would have gone almost for life or death, with him who held the whole neighbourhood in a state of practical and absolute serfdom. Those whom she had served had nothing more to expect from the same hand; and, one half at least of the world's gratitude is paid, not so much in requital of past, as in anticipation of future, and additional favours. Amongst such as had

received nothing at her hands, she felt it would be a bootless task to solicit assistance in her present condition.

With her thoughts thus occupied, the distance over which she had passed seemed swallowed up; so that, somewhat to her surprise, an exclamation from the lips of little Fanny unexpectedly reminded her of the fact that they were now close upon the grounds adjoining the old hall of Kiddal. Its groups of ornamented stone chimneys, and its high-pointed roofs, stood black against the sky; while its lightless windows, and its homestead hushed in death-like silence, which not even the bark of a dog disturbed, appeared to present to her mind a gloomy, though a fitting, picture of the residence of such a tenant.

"Here, at least," thought she, "if I can find a barn open, or a bedding of dry straw to place under the wall between some of the huge buttresses of the house, we shall be most secure from molestation; for even should they find us in the morning, the master will scarcely deny, even to me, the pitiable shelter of his walls for a creature that is indebted to him for its existence."

Thus thinking, she passed through the gateway adjoining the road, and thence on to the lawn and garden in front of the house, intending to make her way beyond the reach and hearing of the dogs, to a more remote and unfrequented portion of the outbuildings; but as she passed the windows of the old wainscotted room before-mentioned, the sound of voices within caught her ear. Was it not possible, that the squire might be speaking in some way or other of her?

We are ever jealous of those who have done us wrong; and never more so, however little we may credit it, than when the sense of that wrong lies most keenly upon us. Colin was soundly asleep in her arms; she had nothing to fear. Leaving Fanny, therefore, under cover of a laurel-tree, she stepped lightly but rapidly up, and placed herself close by the window, about the same moment that, as previously described, Mr. Lupton had entered the room. Of the conversation that passed she could only catch occasional portions; and, in her endeavours to press still closer to the casement, young Master Colin got squeezed, against the projecting moulding of the stone wall, in a manner which called forth that instantaneous expression of complaint and resentment, by which Mrs. Lupton and her friend had been so dreadfully alarmed. It was now no time for Mrs. Clink to stay any longer; she smothered her baby's head in her clothes to stifle the sounds; and having again taken the hand of little Fanny, made the best of her way over ditch and briar in the direction of the highroad.

Beyond the boundary of Mr. Lupton's grounds she came upon a by-way, originally intended, as the blackthorn hedges on the other side denoted, to be used as a kind of occupation lane, by the farmers who held the fields adjacent; but which, from the abundant grass with which it was overgrown, save where, in the middle, a narrow path meandered, like a packthread along a strip of green cloth, was evidently but little used, except as a foot-way by the straggling bumpkins who so thinly populated that remote territory. Mrs. Clink remembered, from the local features of the place, that about a mile or so further up this road, stood a small hedge pothouse, of no very brilliant repute, to be sure, amongst those to whom such an accommodation was needless, but highly necessary and useful to a certain class of persons whose convenience was best attained in places beyond the immediate reach and inspection.



of all descriptions of local and legal authorities. It stood upon a piece of ground just beyond the domains of Squire Lupton, and, though pretty generally known as the resort of many lawless characters, was maintained by the proprietor of the soil in pure spite to his neighbour, the squire, whom he hated with that cordial degree of hatred not uncommonly existing between great landed proprietors, and the jealous little freeholders who dwell upon their skirts. Towards this house, then, Mrs. Clink, in her extremity bent her way, and after half an hour spent in stumbling over the irregularities of a primitive road, winding amongst a range of low hills, studded with thick plantations and close preserves for game, she arrived in sight of the anticipated haven; but it was not without some degree of fear, that several times in the course of this journey, when she chanced to cast her eyes back upon the way she had passed, the shadowy figure of a human being, skulking along under cover of the hedgerows, and apparently dodging her footsteps, had appeared to her; though under an aspect so blended with the shadows of night as left it still doubtful whether or not the whole was a creation of imagination and imperfect vision.

A small desolate-looking hut, with a publican's sign over the door, put up more for pretence than use, now stood before her. At the same moment the figure she had seen shot rapidly forward up a ditch by the road-side, and disappeared behind the house.

As she approached, the sound of several boisterous voices reached her ear: and then the distant words of part of an old song, which one of the company was singing:—

“As I and my dogs went out one night,
The moon and the stars did shine so bright,
To catch a fat buck we thought we might,
Fal de ral lu ra la!”

A rushing blast of wind bore away a verse or two of the narrative; but, as she had by this time reached the door, she stood still a moment, while the singer went on—

“He came all bleeding, and so lame,
He was not able to follow the game,
And sorry was I to see the same,
Fal de ral lu ra la!”

“I’ll take my long staff in my han’
And range the woods to find that man,
And if that I do, his hide I’ll tan,
Fal de ral lu ra la!”

The singer stopped.

“Go on—go on!” cried several voices, “finish it somehow; let’s hear th’ end on’t!”

“Dang it!” exclaimed the singer, in a sort of good-natured passion, “I don’t remember it. This isn’t the next verse, I know it isn’t; but I’ll try.

“Next day we offer’d it for sale,
Fal de ral lu ra li to la!
Unto an old woman that did sell ale,
Fal de ral lu ra la!”

"Next day we offer'd it for sale
 Unto an old woman that did sell ale,
 But she'd liked to have put us all in gaol,
 Fal de ral lu ra la!

There!" he exclaimed again, "I know no more if you'd see me to sing it, so good b'ye to that, and be dang'd to it! as the saying goes." At the same time the sound of a huge pot bounced upon the table, bore good evidence that the speaker had not allowed his elegant sentiment to pass without due honour.

Mrs. Clink scarcely felt heart enough to face such a company as this without some previous notice. She accordingly knocked at the door somewhat loudly, whereupon every voice suddenly became silent, and a scrambling noise ensued, as of the gathering up of weapons; or, as though the individuals within were striving, upon the instant, to put themselves, from a state of disorder, into a condition fitted for the reception of any kind of company that might, at such an hour, chance to do them the honour of a visit.

"Who's there?" cried a sharp voice inside the door, which Colin's mother recognised as that of the landlady of the house. She applied her mouth near the keyhole, and replied,

"It's only me, Mrs. Mallory—only Anne Clink. I want a bed to night, if you can let me have one."

"A bed!" repeated Mrs. Mallory. "This time o' night, and a bed! Sure there's nobody else?"

Mrs. Clink satisfied the inquiries of the landlady in this particular, and gave her full assurances that no treachery was intended; still farther giving her to understand that Longstaff, the steward, had turned her out of house and home, late as it was, not an hour before. The bolt was withdrawn, and Mrs. Clink walked in. The first greeting she received was from a dogged-looking savage, in a thick old velveteen shooting-jacket, who sat directly opposite the door.

"It's well for you, missus, you aren't a gamekeeper or I should have put a leaden pill in your head afore this." Saying which, he raised from his side a short gun that had been held in readiness, and put it up the sleeve of his coat,—to which its construction was especially adapted, for security.

"Yes; we tell no tales here," observed another: "a ditch in th' woods is longer than th' longest tongue that ever spoke."

"What, you think," added the first speaker, "a crack on the scull, and two or three shovelfuls of dirt, soon stops a gabble, do ye? Ay, by Go! you're right, lad there; and so it does."

An uncouth laugh, which went nearly round the company, at once evinced their sense of the facetiousness of this remark, and showed the feeling of indifference with which nearly all present regarded a remedy for tale-telling of the kind here suggested; but, in the meantime, the individual whose appearance in the house had elicited these remarks, had been conducted, with her young charge, into a small inner room, where we will leave her conversing with Mrs. Mallory, or preparing for very needful rest, as the case may be. Scarcely, however, had she passed out of hearing, before some inquiry was made by the ruffian who had first spoken, and whose name, it may be observed, was David Shaw, as to the family and genealogy of old Jerry Clink, "Because," he observed, "this woman called herself a Clink; and, as Jerry will be here to night, I thought they might be summut related."

The explanation given by another of the company in reply, went on to state that at the time when Jerry was doing well in business he had two daughters, whom he brought up like two ladies: But I thought there would soon be an end of that," continued the speaker, "and so there was. The old man was getting on too fast by half; so that when his creditors came on him, and he'd all this finery to pay for, he found he'd been sailing in shallop water; and away he went off to prison. What became of the gals I don't know exactly; but if my memory be right, one of 'em died; and t'other was obliged to take up with a place in a confectioner's shop. I don't know how true it is; but report said after that, that Mrs. Longstaff here, the steward's wife at th' hail, persuaded her to go over as a sort of schoolmissis to her children; though, if that had been the case, she could not have been coming to such a house as this at twelve o'clock at night, and especially with two of th' children along wi' her. Thou must be mistaken, David, i' th' name, I think."

"Am I?" said David, sourly; "then I think not."

A signal-sound near the door, in imitation of the crowing of a pheasant, announced the arrival at this instant of old Jerry Clink. David drew the bolt without stay or question, and the individual named walked in. Below the middle height and not surpassingly elegant in shape, he still bore in his features and carriage some traces of the phantom of a long vanished day of respectability. His habiliments, however, appeared by their condition, cut, and colour, to have been gathered at various periods from as many corners of the empire. A huge snuff-coloured long coat, originally made for a man as big again as himself, and which stood round him like a sentry-box, matched very indifferently with a red plush waist-coat, adorned with blue glass buttons, which scarcely kissed the band of his inexpressibles; while the latter, composed of broad-striped corduroy, not unlike the impression of a rake on a garden path, hung upon his shrivelled legs in pleasing imitation of the hide of a rhinoceros. Blue worsted stockings, and quarter boots, laced tightly round his ankles with leathern thongs, completed the costume of the man.

Should the classical reader feel curious after a portrait of this gentleman we refer him—unless our friend Cruikshank supply a better—to a profile which he will find prefixed to Conyers Middleton's Life of Cicero, which bears no contemptible resemblance to Jerry, save that it lacks the heavy weight of animal faculties in the occipital region, which, in the head of our friend, seemed to toss the scale of humanities in front most wholly up into the air.

"Well, how are you to-night,—all on you together?" asked Jerry, in a tone of voice which Dr. Johnson himself might have envied when he brow-beat the very worst of his opponents, at the same time assisting himself to about a drachm of snuff from a tin case drawn from his coat-pocket, the contents of which he applied to his nasal organ by the aid of a small ladle, turned out of a boar's tusk, much as a scavenger might shovel dust into a cart. A general answer having been returned that all were in good health.

"Well, well," replied Jerry, "then tak' care to keep so, and mark I clap that injunction on you. What the dickins should you go to make yourself badly for! Here stand away."

And so saying, he pushed Mr. David Shaw on one side, and elbowed half a dozen more on the other, as he strode forward towards the fire with the sole but very important object in view of poking it. He then sat down upon a seat that had purposely been vacated for him near the fire, and inquired in the same surly tone,

"What are you drinking?"

"Here's plenty of ale, Jerry," replied David.

"Now, now," objected Mr. Clink, "what are you going to insult me for? Talk of ale!—you know I've tasted none now these thirteen years, and shan't again, live as long as I will:—Mrs. Mallory, here d'ye hear! bring me a glass of gin; and then, David," giving that amiable character a good-humoured poke under the right ribs, "you can pay for it, if you like."

"Can I?" asked the person thus addressed, when he was suddenly cut short by old Jerry.

"Nay, nay, now!—I shall appeal to the company,—I never asked you; so don't go to say I did. Can you insure me four brace of birds and a few good tench by to-morrow morning? 'Cause if you think you can, the sooner you set about it, the sooner we shall get rid of you."

"Well, I'll try, Jerry, if you want 'em particular."

"Particular or not particular, what's that to you? I give you an order, and that, you'll admit, is the full extent of your business. Have you been up to them woods close to the house since t'other night?" he inquired; and on being answered in the negative, thus continued,—“Then go to-night; for I've spread a report that'll draw most of them that you have to fear down into the valley; and there's plenty of time for you to go, and to get home again before they find out the mistake.”

I need scarcely remind the reader that every part of this conversation which related to the sports of the field, was carried on in a tone of voice scarcely audible even half across the room, and also that the door had been effectually secured, and the candles removed, some minutes before the bell in Braunleigh tower struck twelve. For the accommodation, however, of those who might have business to transact abroad after that hour, a private road known only to those in whom confidence could be placed, had been constructed under ground, commencing from the back of an old closet in the place, now occupied as a coal-house, and opening again, in order the better to avoid detection, in a pig-sty at the rear of the premises.—Through this passage Mr. Shaw now steered his course, chanting, rather than singing to himself as he left the room,

"We'll hunt his game
Through field and brake;
His ponds we'll net,
His fish we'll take;
His woods we'll scour
In nutting time;
And his mushrooms gather
At morning prime;
Since Nature gave—deny't who can—
These things in common to ev'ry man."

"Ay, ay," remarked old Jerry, as the man departed, "if every man understood his trade as well as David does, there would be a good deal more sport by night, and less by light, than there is: but every dog to his varmint; he knows all the beasts of the forest, beasts of chase, beasts and fowls of warren, and the laws of them, as well as the best sportsman in England that ever was, is, or will be."

"But I'll tell thee what he don't know," remarked the same individual who, prior to Mr. Clink's appearance, had given a brief sketch of the last-named gentleman's previous career; "he don't know, any more

nor some o' the rest of us, whether or no there's any relations of yours living up this quarter."

"Why, as to that," replied Jerry, "if he'd wanted to be informed whether I had any relation here, and I had been in his company at the time, I could have stited this here. My youngest daughter, Anne, was sent for by Mrs. Longstaff, wife of Squire Lupton's steward, considerably above twelve months ago, to eddicate her children, and, to the best of my knowledge, she's there yet. There is but *one* action in my life that gives me anything like satisfaction to reflect on, and that is, I spared neither expense nor trouble, when I had the means in my power, to fit my children for something better in the world than I myself was born to. And well it was I did so; or else as things have come to this, and I'm not quite so rich as I once was, I can't say what might have become of them. What, wa'n't it Socrates the heathen philosopher, that considered learning the best portion a man could bestow on his children?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied the other. "what he considered; but if that's your daughter, and you don't know what's become of her, I can tell you she *isn't* at Mrs. Longstaff's now. Well, you may put your pipe down, and look at me as hard as you like, but it will not alter the truth. I believe she's under this roof, in that back-room there, with Mrs. Mallory, at this very minute."

"Confound it!" exclaimed Jerry, rising and striding towards the door of the room alluded to, "how is this? Fout play, my lads? By G—! if there is—" and before the sentence was finished, he had walked in and closed the door behind him. At that moment a faint shriek of surprise was heard within, and a cry of—"Oh, father, father!"

The reader will perhaps readily see through the secret of all this without my assistance. It may, nevertheless, not be without its use, if by way of summing up, I briefly state, that during the time the mother of our hero was placed, as had been hinted in the previous conversation, in a shop in the great manufacturing town of Leeds, her appearance had attracted the attention of Mr. Lupton, when on his visits there in his magisterial capacity, and that he had ingeniously contrived, with the aid, counsel, and assistance of the debased and complying Mr. Longstaff, to entice her thence by the offer of a far better situation in the capacity of governess to the steward's children, than that of which she was already in the enjoyment. When the consequences of the fatal error into which she had been led became evident to herself, she instantly quitted Mr. Longstaff's house; and, by the consent of Mr. Lupton, retired to a cottage in the village; where she maintained herself during some months by the small profits of needlework, which was sent to her regularly from the hall; and in the vain hope of keeping secure the secret of her own bosom, she had purposely forborne to acquaint any one of her friends of the cause of the change which had taken place, or even of the change itself. So far as the events of the night I am describing were concerned, although Mrs. Mallory was perfectly well acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, and also with the fact that the leading man of the night-company who assembled during the season at her house was Miss Clink's father, she had sufficient reasons, in the wish to keep that unfortunate young woman's secret, to prevent her from discovering to him any portion of her knowledge. The same feeling had caused her also to conceal the fact from both father and daughter that accident,—or misfortune rather,—had now brought them together under the same roof.

After some time had elapsed, during which we may imagine the old

man was made fully acquainted with the situation in which his daughter was placed, he re-entered the room where his companions were assembled.

"Lads!" said he, striking the table violently with his fist, while his lips quivered as with an ague, and his eyes rolled with an expression of unusual ferocity, "if I live to go to th' gallows for it, old as I am, I'll cool the blood of that man up at yonder hall for what he's done to me and mine! To go in there, and see that wench a mother before she is a wife,—her character gone for ever.—ruined,—lost,—and she the only one left to redeem the character of the family!—why, I say, sink me to perdition this instant! if I don't redden his own hearthstone with his own blood, though I wait for it to the last day of my life. As sure as he sees the day, I'll make his children fatherless—I'll have my knife in him!"

"Stop! stop! Mr. Clink!" cried Mrs. Mallory, laying her hand upon his shoulder, "do cool yourself and do not threaten so terribly."

"Threaten!" he exclaimed; "I say you are as bad as them; and it is high time somebody not only threatened, but did it.—What! isn't it enough that they ruin me as a tradesman for ever, and compel me to this beggarly night work, in defiance of both them and their laws, for the sake of a paltry existence, not worth holding from one day to another? Isn't this, I say, enough, but must they ruin our children, and degrade us still lower beside? What!—we are poor, are we!—and it does not matter what a child be done to, so that she is poor. They can bribe us, and buy us, and sell us; and if we be neither bribed, nor bought, nor sold, they can crush us under their feet! Well, well, it may do for some of you,—it may mix with your dastardly spirits very well; but I am of a different metal, lads; and when you see him bribe me, it will be with a redder coin than ever his gold was yet, or ever will be,—that you may depend upon. I never passed by an injury unrevenged yet; and my memory has not yet got so bad as to let that man slip through it. There's some men I should never forgive, if I lived a thousand years, and some that I would lay my own life down to do five minutes' justice on; but above them, there is one shall NEVER slip me, though I go the world over after him!"

"Surrender! at the peril of your lives!" exclaimed a bluff coarse voice behind them, while, to the almost speechless astonishment and dismay of the company, the speaker advanced from the doorway of the coal-house above alluded to, discovering the person of a giant-looking fellow, considerably above six feet in height, clothed in a thick dress for the night air, armed with a long pistol in each hand, and guarded by a ferocious mastiff at his side.

"Down with your lights, and defend yourselves, lads!" cried Jerry; "we are betrayed!"

Almost before these words had passed his lips, half a dozen shots whizzed at the intruder, several of which lodged in Mrs. Mallory's bacon and hams that hung from the ceiling in the room. One of the men on the far side of the table fell from the second shot of the head keeper of Kiddal, for he it was; while the dog he had brought with him attacked with the ferocity of a tiger old Jerry himself, who by this time had drawn a knife nearly nine inches long from his pocket, and stood prepared in the middle of the room for the reception of his four-footed antagonist. Meanwhile, five or six other keepers had found their way through the underground passage before described, and now rushed into the room to aid their leader. Filled with smoke, as the place was,

from the discharge of fire-arms, it became almost impossible to distinguish friends from foes. The lights were extinguished, the fire threw out only a dull red illumination upon the objects immediately contiguous to it, and the momentary glare of discharged guns and pistols alone enabled each party to distinguish, as by a lightning flash, the objects of their mutual enmity. At the same time the fierce worrying and howling of the dog, mingled with the terrific and thick-coming curses of old Jerry, as those two combatants rolled together upon the floor in fearful contention for the mastery, together with the shrieks of the two women on the stairs, made up a chorus too dismal almost for the region of purgatory itself.

In the midst of this, succour arrived for the invaded party in the person of no less a hero than Mr. David Shaw. In a state of exasperation amounting almost to frenzy, that individual rushed into the house by the same way he had left it, crying out as he impetuously advanced, "Where is she?—where is she?"—the idea that Mrs. Clink had purposefully betrayed them being alone uppermost in his mind. Making his way, as if instinctively, towards the stairs, he beheld something like the figure of a woman standing three or four steps above him, for the light was not sufficient to discover more. A plunge with his right hand, which grasped a common pocket-knife, was the work of an instant, and the landlady of the house—for he had mistaken his object—fell with a dead weight under the blow. At the same instant the fingers of his right hand became fast bound, and the blood ran down his arm in a bubbling stream. Instead of doing the murder he intended, the knife blade struck backwards, and closed tightly upon the holder, that three of his fingers and the fleshy part of the thumb were gashed through to the bone. Regardless of all this, he extricated his hand, cast the knife fiercely amongst the combatants, and fell to the attack in right good earnest.

Pope, if I recollect aright, very highly extols some of those similes, which Perrault describes as similes with a long tail, introduced by the greatest of epic poets into his description of the combats between the Trojans and the Greeks. In humble imitation then, of father Homer, let me proceed to say, that as a platoon of maggots on a cheese-plate contend with violent writhings of the body for superiority, as they overrun each other, and alternately gain the uppermost place, or roll ingloriously to the bottom in the ambitious strife for mastery; so did the preservers and the destroyers of game in the parlour of the poacher's ken mingle together in deadly strife, amidst the fall of tables and the wreck of kegs.

Securely seated, after the struggles of an unequal war, old Jerry Clink might now, by the aid of some friendly candle, have been seen reposing himself between the legs of a round table, his countenance and hands so deeply besmeared with blood as to give him all the griminess of a red Indian squatting after a job of scalping, the huge mastiff stretched before him, with his head bruised until his features were not discernable, and a gaping wound behind the left fore-leg, into which had been introduced the weapon that had let out his life; while around lay strewn in confusion the fragments and ribands of nearly every portion of dress that Mr. Clink had previously worn. Nothing was left of his large snuff-coloured coat, save the collar and a small portion of the upper ends of the arms; his red waistcoat lay in twenty pieces around; and his unmentionables hung about him like the shattered bark of some old tree, that had been

doomed to experience the lacerating power of a lightning stroke. Jerry could do no more. He saw David Shaw, after a desperate struggle worthy of a more noble cavalier, subdued, and pinioned like a market-fowl across the back, without the power to make even an effort in his favour; while of the remaining portion of his men some had made their escape, and the rest, having exhausted their means of defence, were surrendering at discretion.

"Well, if I could, I would not leave you, lads," thought Jerry, as he witnessed the defeat of his companions, "I've stood by you in good, and I'll stand by you in evil. Sooner than be guilty of a mean action like that, I'd do as the great Cato did, and fall upon my own pocket-knife. Here," he cried in a loud voice, addressing himself to the head gamekeeper, "here, you big brute! pick me up, will you? I'm going along with all th' rest."

"I know that," responded the individual thus addressed, with an illusion to Mr. Clink's eyes, which would not have benefited them, if carried into effect, quite so materially as might a pinch of Grimston's snuff; "I'll take care of you soon enough, d chap, trust me for that."

So saying, he cast a cord round Jerry's body, binding his arms to his sides; an operation which the latter underwent with the most heroic fortitude and good will. Not so, however, with the next proceeding; for the gamekeeper, having by this time discovered the carcass of his murdered dog under the table, seized hold of the loose end of the rope with which Jerry was tied, and fell to belabouring him without mercy.

The remaining portion of his confederates being now secured in two bunches of three and four respectively, the whole were marched off under a strong escort of their conquerors, to a lock-up in the village, where they remained under guard all night; two or three hours of this time being expended in a hot dispute between Jerry and David Shaw, upon the point whether Mrs. Anne Clink did, or did not, wilfully and maliciously betray them into the hands of their enemies.

That individually she was innocent, the reader is fully aware—although, in reality, she still had been the unconscious cause of all the disasters that occurred. No sooner had she left her house on this eventful night, as described at the conclusion of a preceding chapter, than Mr. Longstaff, being fearful that he might have stretched his authority somewhat too far, appointed his assistant the constable, to steal out and trace her footsteps wherever she might go, until he found her in a resting-place for the night; since, by this precaution, the steward would be enabled, in case of need, to find her again at any moment he might think proper. The constable discharged his commission so well, that he carried back a great deal more than he went for: and not only reported the lodging which Mrs. Clink had taken up, but also discovered that a number of pouchers, as he believed, against whom he had long held a warrant granted for offences against the game-laws, were there, and then assembled in mischievous cogitation, as he had actually seen one of them emerge from a pig-sty at the back of the premises. To be able to detect the unfortunate woman whom he had deprived of a home, in the very act of patronizing a house of pouchers upon the squire's manor, was the very thing for Mr. Longstaff. He lost no time in informing the guardians of the woods what a pretty garrison might be taken by surprise; and they, in accordance with that information, and the direction of the constable, accordingly advanced to the attack with such success as has already been related.

The injury sustained by Mrs. Mallory when knocked down on the staircase was not very material: nor did she feel it half so much as the additional one inflicted on her by the magistrates, when she was, some short time after, called up and fined ten pounds for the share she had taken in this little business. Longstaff struggled hard to involve Mrs. Clink in the same difficulty, on the plea that she had aided and abetted Mrs. Mallory, either in having game in her possession, or in eating it; but he failed to make out a case: and, as the squire entirely disapproved of the step he had taken in breaking up that lady's house, the steward had the additional mortification of hearing himself commanded not only to reinstate her therein, but also to make ample restitution for the loss and misery he had occasioned to her.

In conclusion of this chapter, and of the events recorded therein, I may briefly observe, that, early on the following morning, old Jerry Clink, and seven of his associates, were conveyed to the castle at York; and that, after soliloquizing there during some weeks, they underwent their trial. Now, if any man can escape an infringement of the game-laws, especially if accompanied by the show of violence, he can escape anything—in the items of burglary, manslaughter, and arson, he may be considered invulnerable. They all were found guilty: and, while some of the lesser offenders were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment at home, Mr. David Shaw and Jerry Clink were accommodated with a fourteen year's residence in New South Wales. This judgment served only to sharpen the fangs of Jerry's resentment; but, as revenge is a commodity which, like Thorne's Tally-Ho Sauce, may be warranted to keep in all climates with equal freshness, Jerry not only carried his resentment out with him, and preserved it while abroad, but likewise brought it back again, for the purpose of making use of it, as we shall have occasion to see, after his return to his own country.

CHAPTER VII.

Though short, would yet be found, could it be measured by time, nearly fifteen years long. Colin Clink's boyhood and character. A trap is laid for him by Mr. Longstaff, into which his mother lets him fall: with other matters highly essential to be told.

HAD not the days of omens and prognostications in great part passed by at that enlightened period in which our story commences, it would inevitably have been prophesied that the child whose very birth had made the steward's wife jealous, set a steward altogether by the ears, and gone far to cloud the mind of the lady of Kiddal House, was predestined to create no common stir when he became a man. In that little vessel, it would have been contended, was contained a large measure of latent importance; although, contrary to the most approved and authentic cases of this nature, there was neither mark, spot, mole, nor even pimple, upon him; no strawberry on his shoulder, no cherry on his neck, no fairy's signet on his breast, by which the Fates are sometimes so obliging as to signify to anxious mothers the future eminence of their sons, or to stamp their identity. But in the absence of all or any of these, he was gifted with that which some people consider of almost as much importance amongst the elements of future greatness,—an

amount of brain which would have rejoiced the late Dr. Spurzheim, and put sweetness into the face of Gall himself.

During the earlier years of his childhood, Master Colin did not display anything uncommon; if I except the extraordinary talent he developed in the consumption of all kinds of edible commodities, whereby, I firmly believe, he laid the foundation of that excellent figure in which he figured after arriving at the age of manhood. Sometimes, when his mother was in a mood prospective and reflective, she would look upon him with grief, and almost wish him appetiteless; but Colin stared defiance in her face as he filled his mouth with potatoes, and drank up as much milk as would have served a fatting calf.

Reinstated in the habitation where Colin was born, his mother eventually established a little shop, containing nearly everything, in a small way, that the inhabitants of such a locality could require. A bag of flour, a tub of oatmeal, and half a barrel of red herrings, stood for show directly opposite the door. A couple of cheeses, and a keg of butter, adorned the diminutive counter. Candles, long and short, thick and thin, dangled from the ceiling; half a dozen long brushes and mops stood sentry in one corner; and in and about the window was displayed a varied collection of pipes, penny loaves, tobacco, battledores, squares of pictures twenty-four for a halfpenny, cotton balls, whipcord, and red worsted nightcaps. In this varied storehouse, with poor pale little Fanny for his nurse, until he grew too big for her any longer to carry him, did our hero Colin live and thrive. After he had found his own legs, his nurse became his companion: and many a time, as he grew older,—pitying her hungry looks, and solemn-looking eyes,—has he stolen out with half his own meals in his pinafore, on purpose to give them unseen to her who, he thought, wanted them more than he. But in time the little shop was to be minded, and Fanny had grown up enough to attend to it. Colin missed his companion in the fields, and therefore he too stayed more at home; and never felt more happy than when, his mother's daily lessons being ended,—he hurried into the shop, and found something that he could do to help Fanny in her service.

Possibly it might arise from the bitterness of her own reflections upon the evils, and the misery, resulting from the insincerity and deception so common amongst every class of society, that Mrs. Clink very early emphatically impressed upon the mind of her boy the necessity of being, above all things, candid and truth-telling, regardless of whatever might be the consequences. Disadvantages, she knew, must accompany so unusual a style of behaviour: but, then she said to herself.

“Let him but carry it out through life, and, if no other good come of it but this, it will far outbalance all the rest,—that, by him at least, no other young heart will be destroyed, as mine has been. No lasting misery will by him be entailed on the confiding and the helpless, under the promise of protection: no hope of the best earthly happiness be raised in a weak heart, only to be broken, amidst pain and degradation, and self-reproach, that has no end except with life. If I can bring up but one such man, thus pure in heart and tongue, I shall die in the full consciousness that, whatever my own sins may have been, I have left behind me one in the world far better than any I have found there!”

And so Master Colin was tutored on all occasions to think as correctly as he could, and then to say what he thought, without fear, or hope of favour.

While Colin year after year thus continued to advance toward that period when he should finally peck his way through the shell of his childhood, and walk out unfledged into the world, his career did not pass unmarked by that ancient enemy of his mother, Longstaff, the steward. Wherever that worthy went, he was doomed, very frequently, to hear the name of young Master Clink alluded to in terms which, in the inner man of Mr. Longstaff, seemed to throw even the cleverest of his own little Longstuffs at home totally in the rear. Colin was a daring fellow, or a good-hearted fellow, or a comical lad, who promised to turn out something more than common; while Master Chatham Bolingbroke Longstaff, and Mrs. Æneasius Laxton Longstaff, the most promising pair of the family, were no more talked about, save by himself, Mrs. Longstaff, and the servants, than they would have been had they never honoured society with their presence. The annoyance resulting to Mr. Longstaff from this comparison was rendered more bitter in consequence of the formerly alleged, but now universally disowned, relationship between himself and our hero. He could not endure that the very child, whose mother had endeavoured to cast disgrace upon him, and whom he hated on that account with intense hatred, should thus, not only, as it were, exalt poverty above riches, but overtop intellectually in their native village as fine a family as any Suffolk grazier could wish to see. He determined, at length, to use his utmost exertions in order to rid the village of him; and, the better to effect his object, he endeavoured, by descending to meannesses which would not have graced anybody half so well as himself, to worm himself again into the good opinion of Colin's mother, by pretending that the doctrine of forget and forgive was not only eminently Christian and pious in itself, but that also, if it were not to be continually acted upon, and practically carried out, the various members of society might have nothing else to do but to be at endless war with one another. Though he had at one time certainly regarded Mrs. Clink as a very great enemy of his, he yet wished to let by-gones be by-gones; and, as she had had such a misfortune, if he could be of any benefit to her in putting the boy out when he was old enough, he should not refuse his services. Now, although the spirit of Mrs. Clink only despised this man for his conduct from first to last, and not the less so on account of what she considered his present unmanly speaking for the purpose of currying her good-will again, she yet reflected that the benefit of Colin was her highest consideration; and that any help which might be extended to her for him, ought not to be refused, however much she might dislike the hand that gave it.

An opening accordingly appeared to the prophetic eye of Mr. Longstaff, not only for ridding the parish of one whose presence he could not tolerate, but also of accommodating him with a situation where he would have the satisfaction of reflecting that Colin would both sleep on thorns, and wake to pass his days in no garden of roses. He would lower his crest for him—he would take the spirit out of him—he would contrive to place him where he should learn on the wrong side of his mouth how to make himself the talk of a town, while the children of his great superiors were passed by as though they had neil er wealth, quality nor talent to recommend them; and, in doing this, he should at the same time, be paying, with compound interest, the debt he owed to Colin's mother.

Such were the steward's reflections, when he found that the bait he

hung out had been taken by Mrs. Clink, and that he should, at the first convenient opportunity, have it wholly in his power to dispose of Master Colin Clink after the best fashion his laudable wish for vengeance might suggest.

How Mr. Longstaff planned and succeeded in his design, and what kind of people Master Colin got amongst, together with certain curious adventures which befel him in his new situation, I shall proceed, with all due attention to the reader's convenience, to relate in the ensuing chapter, as it is imperative upon me to conclude the present with some reference to the proceedings of the parties whom we left in trouble at the old hall of Kiddal.

When Dr. Rowel had fully attended to the wants of his unfortunate patient, Miss Shirley seized the earliest opportunity to make an earnest inquiry of him as to Mrs. Lupton's state, and the probabilities of her speedy recovery.

"Oh, she will soon be better—much better!" encouragingly exclaimed the doctor. "A slight delirium of this kind is easily brought on by excitement; but it is only temporary. There is no organic disease whatever. We shall not have the least occasion to think of removing her to *my establishment*,—not the least. Mrs. Lupton is constitutionally very sensitive; but she is not a subject in any way predisposed to mental affliction. The course of my practice has led me to make, perhaps, a greater amount of observation on diseases of this peculiar description than could be found amongst all the other medical men in England put together. I do not hesitate at all to state that, because I *know* it to be the fact; and I have invariably remarked, that amongst the great majority of insane persons that have been under my care, and no practitioner could have had more, there is a peculiarity,—a difference,—an organic *something* or other, which, I am as much convinced as of my own existence, might have been perceptible to a clever man at the period of their very earliest mental development, and which marked them out, if I may so say, to become at one period or other of their lives inmates of such establishments as this extensive one of mine at Nabbfield. But the good lady of this house has nothing of that kind about her. I pronounce her to be one of the very last persons who could require, for permanent mental affections, the care, restraint, and assiduous attentions, only to be obtained in a retreat, where the medical adviser is himself a permanent resident. The course of treatment I am adopting will soon bring her about again,—very soon. But I must beg you will be so kind as to take care that she is kept quiet, and—and prevent her as much as possible from conversing on painful or exciting subjects," concluded the doctor, smiling very sweetly as he looked into Miss Shirley's eyes and profoundly bowed her a good night.

"That fellow is a quack," thought Miss Shirley, as she returned to Mrs. Lupton's chamber. "There is, as he says, *an organic something* about him that renders him very repulsive to me; and, if nothing worse come of him than we have had to-night, it will be a great deal more than his appearance promises."

Thus thinking, she threw herself into an easy-chair by her friend's bed-side, and remained watching her, attentively through the night.

However much of a quack the doctor might be, his opinion respecting Mrs. Lupton's recovery proved to be correct. In the course of a few weeks she might have been seen as formerly, for hours together,

with slow steps, and a deep-seated expression of melancholy, pacing the gardens and woods of Kiddal, regardless almost of times and seasons. Though now perfectly recovered, her recent illness formed a very plausible pretext on which to found reasons for hastening her again away from home: for that she was an unwelcome tenant there, will readily be believed from the facts already related.

One day, after a private consultation with the squire, Dr. Rowel suddenly discovered that it would prove materially beneficial to the health of the lady of Kiddal were she to exchange for some time the dull monotonous life of the gloomy old hall, for the more gay and spirit-stirring society of some busy city. He, therefore, impressed upon her, as a condition absolutely indispensable to a perfectly restored tone of the mind, the necessity under which she lay of residing for a while in or about the metropolis. Mrs. Lupton soon mentioned the subject again to her friend Miss Shirley.

"It has been proposed to me," said she, "to leave this place, and reside a while in London. I know the reason well—I feel it in my heart bitterly. I have been here too long, Mary. My picture on the wall is quite enough—he does not want me; but it is of no use to complain; I shall be as happy there as I am here, or here as I should be there. The time that I spend here seems to me only like one long thought of the hour, whether it come soon or late, when all that I endure shall be at an end. The only thing I love here, Mary, is that sweet little churchyard,—it looks so peaceful? When I am away, my only wish is that of returning, though why I should wish to return appears strange. But I cannot help it,—I know not how it is: but while I am alive, Mary, it seems as though I must haunt what ought to be my place, whether I will or not. Welcome or unwelcome, loved or hated, I feel that I am still a wife."

Her unresisting spirit gave way to the proposed arrangement without a murmur, and, with the exception of one or two brief visits which she made during the summer season to her unhappy home, she remained, for the time of which I have spoken, living apart, as though formally separated from her husband, during a lengthened period of some years. Under these circumstances, her friend Miss Shirley continued almost constantly with her, diverting her mind as much as possible from the subject which poisoned the happiness of her whole life, and supporting her in sorrow, when to divert reflection was possible no longer.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Longstaff rides over to Snitterton Lodge to obtain Colin a situation. Miss Maria Sowersoft and Mr. Samuel Paltothorpe—his future mistress and master—described,

At the distance of some five or six miles from Bramleigh, and to the southwest of that village lies an extensive tract of bare, treeless country, which some years ago was almost wholly uninclosed; if we except a small farm, the property of the church, together with some few scattered patches, selected on account of their situation, and inclosed with low stone walls, in order to entitle them to the denomination of fields. Owing to the abundance of gorse, or whins, with which the uncultivated parts of that district were overgrown, it had obtained the characteristic name of "Whinmoor;" while, in order to cover the barrenness of the

place, and to exalt it somewhat in the eyes of strangers, the old farm itself, to which I have alluded, was dignified with the title of Snitterton Lodge, the seat of Miss Maria Sowersoft, its present tenant.

Early one morning in the spring season, Mr. Longstaff, the steward, mounted his horse in high glee, and jogged along the wily by-roads which led towards this abode, with the intention of consulting Miss Sowersoft upon a piece of business, which to him was of the very greatest importance. He had ascertained on the preceding evening that Miss Sowersoft was in want of a farming-boy; one whom she could have cheap, and from some little distance off. Indeed, from a combination of circumstances unfavourable to herself, she found some difficulty in getting suited from the immediate neighbourhood where she was known. If the boy happened to be without friends to look after him, or to interfere between him and his employer, all the better. Peace would thereby be much more certainly secured; besides that, it would be all the greater charity to employ such a boy in a place where, she well knew, he would never lack abundance of people to look after him, and to chastise him whenever he went wrong. In fact, Miss Maria herself regarded the situation as so eligible in the matters of little work, large feeding, and excellent moral tutorage, that she held the addition of wages to be almost unnecessary; and, therefore, very piously offered less than half the sum commonly given elsewhere.

Mr. Longstaff had been acquainted with Miss Sowersoft for some years in the way of trade; as that conscientious lady was in the habit of purchasing broken-kneed horses, &c. off the estate at Branleigh; and after doctoring them up, and disguising their blemishes, of reselling them as sound wherever she could, whether to strangers, friends, or relations. He had enjoyed various opportunities, therefore, of becoming acquainted with her character; and he knew that, if he had possessed the power to make a situation for Master Colin Clink exactly after the model of his own fancy, he could not have succeeded better in gratifying his own malice, than he was likely to do by getting the boy placed under the care of the mistress of Snitterton Lodge.

Mr. Longstaff arrived at the place of his destination about two hours before noon; and, on entering the house, found Miss Sowersoft very busily engaged in frying a meal of veal cutlets for the delicate palate of a trencher-faced, red-clay, complexioned fellow, who sat at his ease in a home-made stuffed chair by the fire, looking on while the operation proceeded, with all the confidence and self-satisfaction of a master of the house. This worthy was the head farming-man, or director general of the whole establishment, not excluding Miss Maria herself; for he exercised a very sovereign sway, not only over everything done, and over every person employed upon the premises but, also, it was generally believed, over the dreary region of Miss Sowersoft's heart. That he was a paragon of perfection, and well-entitled to wield the sceptre of the homestead, there could be no doubt, since Miss Maria herself, who must be considered the best judge, most positively declared it.

In his youth this useful man had been christened Sammel; but time, which impairs cloud-capped towers, and crumbles palaces, had fretted away some portion of that stately name, and left to him only the fragmentary appellation of "Sammy."

"What!" exclaimed the steward, in surprise, as he caught the sound of the frying pan, and beheld a clean napkin spread half over the table.

on Sammy's side, with one knife and fork, and a plateful of bread, laid upon it; "dinner at ten o'clock, Miss Sowersoft?"

"Good morning to you, sir!" interposed Sammy.

"Oh, bless you, no!" replied the individual addressed, it is only a bit of warm lunch I was just frizzling for Sammy. You see, steward, he is out in these fields at six o'clock every morning, standing in the sharp cold winds till he is almost perished, and his appetite gets as keen as mustard. Really, I do say sometimes I wonder how he does it to be so well as he is: but then you know, he is used to it, and I generally do him up a bit of something hot about nine or ten o'clock, that serves him pretty well till dinner-time. Even with that, you'd be astonished, Mr. Longstaff, to see the dinner he pecks up two hours after. I'm obliged to get him one little thing or other three or four times a day, he is so very delicate. If I had not always something ready for him to pounce upon at the very time he thinks he can eat a bit, it would be all of no use; his relish for it would be gone directly." Then handing up a dish of cutlets sufficient for a small family, she continued,—“Now, Sammy, do try if you can manage this morsel while it is hot. Will you have ale, or a sup of warm gin-and-water.”

Sammy was in no hurry to inform her which of the two he should prefer; and therefore Miss Sowersoft remained in an attitude of expectation, watching Sammy's mouth, until it pleased him to express his decision in favour of gin-and-water.

While Mr. Samuel Palethorpe was intently engaged in putting the cutlets out of sight, Mr. Longstaff introduced the subject of his visit in a brief conversation, which was carried on with the mistress of the house, while she was engaged in the delightful duty of mixing a quantum of the aforesaid spirit, in readiness whenever Sammy might feel a relish for it. Mr. Longstaff gave the lady to understand that he had taken the trouble of riding on purpose over to name to her a boy, one Colin Clink, who, he believed, would just suit the situation she had vacant. He was now about fifteen years old, but as strong as an unbroke filly; he had sense enough to learn anything; had no friends,—only one, in the shape of a helpless mother,—so that Miss Sowersoft might do anything she liked with him without fear of being crossed by anybody's meddling; and, at the same time, he thought that by a little dexterous management she might contrive to obtain him for an old song. For several reasons, which it would be needless to explain, he himself also strongly wished to see the boy comfortably settled in her house, as he felt convinced that it would prove highly advantageous to all parties concerned. He concluded by recommending Miss Sowersoft to pay a visit to Bramleigh; when she would not only see the boy with her own eyes, but also make such statements to his mother as to her night at the time seem fit. To this proposal Miss Maria eventually agreed: and this amiable pair parted on the understanding that she should be driven over by Mr. Palethorpe in the chaise-cart the following day. Just as Mr. Longstaff was passing out of the door, he was invited in again to take a glass of wine; an appeal which he felt no desire to resist, especially as it was immediately reached out and filled for him by the fair hand of the hostess herself.

"You'll have one, Sammy?" asked she, as she placed a glass upon the table, close under the nose of that hero, "for I'm sure it can do you no harm such a day as this."

"Why, thank'ee, meesis," replied he, filling it to the brim, "but I feel as if I'd had almost enough."

"Stuff and nonsense about enough!" cried Miss Maria; "you are always feeling as if you had had enough, according to your account; though you eat and drink nothing at all, hardly, considering what you get through every day."

Sammy looked particularly spiritual at this, as though he felt half-persuaded that he did actually live like a seraph, and took off his wine at a gulp, satisfied, in the innocence of his own heart, that no reflections whatever could be made upon him by the steward after the verbal warrant thus given by his mistress, in corroboration of the extreme abstinence which he endured.

"Well, meesis," continued Sammy, rising from his chair, stretching his arms, and opening his mouth as wide as the entrance of a hen-roost, "I'll just go again a bit, and see how them men's getting on. They do nought but look about 'em when I arn't there." And, so saying, he walked out, with the cautious deliberation of a man just returning from a public dinner.

"A man like that," said Miss Sowersoft, as she gazed after him with looks of admiration, "Mr. Longstaff, is a treasure on a farm; and I am sure we could never get our own out of this, do as we would, till he came and took the direction of it. He is such an excellent manager to be sure, and does understand all kinds of cattle so well. Why, his opinion is always consulted by everybody in the neighbourhood: but then, you know, if they buy, he gets a trifle for his judgment, and so that helps to make him up a little for his own purse. I could trust him with every penny I possess, I'm sure. He sells out and buys in everything we have; and I never yet lost a single farthing by anything he did. Why, you remember that pony of Dr. Rowel's; he knocked it to pieces with his hard riding, and one thing or another; well, Sammy bought that; and, by his good management of his knees, and a few innocent falsehoods, you know, just in the way of trade, he sold it again to a particular friend, at a price that more than doubled our money."

The steward, weary of Sammy's praises, and despairing of an end to them, pulled out his watch and observed that it was high time for him to be on the saddle again. On which Miss Sowersoft checked herself for the present, and, having renewed her promise to go to Brauleigh on the morrow, allowed Mr. Longstaff to depart.

With such a clever master, and eloquent mistress, Colin could scarcely fail to benefit most materially; and so he did,—though not exactly in the way intended,—for he learned while there, a few experimental lessons in the art of living in the world, which lasted him during the whole subsequent period of his life: and which he finally bequeathed to me, in order to have them placed on record for the benefit of the reader.

CHAPTER IX.

Enhances the reader's opinion of Mr. Palethorpe and Miss Sowersoft still higher and higher; and describes an interview which the latter had with Mr. Longstaff respecting our hero.

The benevolent Mr. Longstaff lost no time after his return home in acquainting Mrs. Clink with the great and innumerable advantages of

the situation at Snitterton Lodge, which he had been endeavouring to procure for her son. Nor did he fail very strongly to impress upon her mind how necessary it would be when Miss Sowersoft should arrive, for her to avoid sticking much about the terms on which Colin was to go; because, if by any mishap she should chance to offend that lady, and thus break off the negotiation, an opportunity would slip through her fingers, which, it was highly probable, no concatenation of fortunate circumstances would ever again throw in her way. Her decision not being required before the following morning, she passed the night almost sleeplessly in considering the affair under every point of view that her anxious imagination could suggest. Colin himself, like most other boys, true to the earliest propensity of our nature, preferred a life passed in fields and woods, amongst horses, dogs, and cattle, to that of a dull shop, behind a counter: or of any tedious and sickly mechanical trade. So far that was good. What he himself approved, he was most likely to succeed in; and with success in field-craft, he might eventually become a considerable farmer, or raise, himself, like Mr. Longstaff, to the stewardship of some large estate. Visions, never to be realised, now rose in vivid distinctness before the mental eyes of Mistress Clink. The far-off greatness of her own son as a man of business passed in shining glory across the field of her telescope. But, when again she reflected that every penny of his fortune remained to be gathered by his own fingers, the glass dropped from her eye,—all became again dark; the speck of light she had so magnified, disappeared. But sleep came to wrap up all doubts; and she woke on the morrow, resolved that Colin should thus for the first time be launched upon the stream of life.

Early in the afternoon a horse stopped at Mrs. Clink's door, bearing upon his back a very well-fed, self-satisfied, easy-looking man, about forty years of age; and, behind him, on a rusty pillion, at least three generations old, a lady in black silk gown and bonnet, of no beautiful aspect, and who had passed apparently about eight-and-forty years in this sublunary world. Mistress Clink was at no loss to conjecture at once that in this couple she beheld the future master and mistress of her son Colin. Nor can it be said she was mistaken; the truth being, that after the departure of Mr. Longstaff from Snitterton Lodge on the preceding day, it had occurred to Miss Sowersoft that instead of taking the chaise-cart, as had been intended, it would be far pleasanter to take the longest-backed horse on the premises, and ride on a pillion behind Sammy. In this manner, then, they reached Bramleigh.

While Mr. Palethorpe went down to the Cock and Bottle to put up his horse, and refresh himself with anything to be found there which he thought he could relish, Miss Sowersoft was conducted into the house by Fanny; and, within the course of a very few minutes, the desired interview between her and Mistress Clink took place.

Colin was soon after called in to be looked at.

"A nice boy!" observed Miss Sowersoft.—"a fine boy, indeed! Dear! how tall he is of his age! Come here, my boy," and she drew him towards her, and fixed him between her knees while she stroked his hair over his forehead and finished off with her hand at the tip of his nose. "And how should you like, my boy, to live with me, and ride on horses, and make hay, and gather up corn in harvest-time, and keep sheep and poultry, and live on all the fat of the land, as we do at Snitterton Lodge?"

"Very much," replied Colin; "I should have some rare fun there."

"Rare fun, would you?" repeated Miss Sowersoft, laughing. "Well, that is finely said. We shall see about that, my boy,—we shall see. Then you would like to go back with us, would you?"

"Oh, yes; I'll go as soon as Fanny has finished my shirts, thank you."

"And when you get there you will tell me how you like it,—won't you."

"Yes, ma'am," continued Colin; "mother has taught me always to say what I think. I shall be sure to tell you exactly."

"What a good mother!" exclaimed Miss Sowersoft.

"I like her better than anybody else in the world," added Colin.

"What, better than me?" ironically demanded Miss Sowersoft.

"I don't like you at all, I tell you!" he replied, at the same time breaking from her hands; "for I don't know you; and, besides, you are not half so pretty as my mother, nor Fanny either."

Miss Sowersoft blushed, and looked confused, at this bit of truth—for a truth it was, which any man or woman, in the world, under similar circumstances, would certainly have *thought*, but not have given utterance to.

"I will teach you your manners, young Impudence, when I get hold of you, or else there are no hazel twigs in Snitterton plantation!" *thought* Miss Sowersoft, reversing Colin's system, and keeping that truth all to herself which she ought to have spoken.

"You will take care he is well fed?" remarked Mistress Clink, somewhat in a tone of interrogation, as though anxious to divert her visitor's thoughts to some other topic.

"As to feeding," replied Miss Maria, once more verging towards her favourite topic, "I can assure you, ma'am, that the most delicious dinner is set out every day on my table; with a fine, large, rich Yorkshire pudding, the size of one of those floor-stones, good enough, I am sure for a duke to sit down to. If you were to see the quantities of things that I put into my oven for the men's dinner, you would be astonished. Great bowls full of stewed meat, puddings, pies, and, I am sure roasted potatoes past counting. Look at Sammy. You saw him. He does no discredit to the farm, I think. And really he is such a cleaver, good honest man! He is worth a Jew's eye on that farm, for I never in my life could get any man like him. Then, see what an excellent master he will be for this boy. In five or six years he would be fit to take the best situation that ever could be got for him, and do Sammy a deal of credit too, for his teaching. And as to his being taken ill, or anything of that kind, we never think of such a thing with us. People often complain of having no appetite, but it requires all that we can do to keep their appetites down. A beautiful bracing air we have off the moor, worth every doctor in Yorkshire; and I really believe it cures more people that are ill than all of them put together. Sammy is almost double the man he was when he first came."

This discourse was not lost upon Mistress Clink. That lady looked upon the character of her visitor as a sort of essence of honesty, hospitality, and good nature; and, influenced by the feelings of the moment, she regarded Mr. Longstaff as really a friendly man. Miss Sowersoft as the best of women, and Colin the most fortunate of boys.

Under these circumstances it became no difficult matter for Miss Maria to settle the affair exactly to her own mind; and, under the pretence

of instruction in his business, which was never to be given,—of abundance, which he never found,—and of good-nature, which was concentrated wholly upon one individual,—to persuade Mistress Clink to give the service of her boy on the consideration that, in addition to all his other advantages, he should receive twenty-five shillings for the first year, and five shillings additional per year afterwards. This bargain being struck, it was agreed that Colin should be sent over at the earliest convenient time; and Miss Sowersoft took her leave.

In order to save the expense of any slight refreshment at the tavern, Miss Maria called upon her friend the steward, on the pretence of communicating to him the result of her visit. She found that worthy in his dining-room, with Master Chatham Bolingbroke Longstaff—whom he was attempting to drill in the art of oratory,—mounted upon the table, and addressing his father, who was the only individual in the room, as a highly respectable and very numerous audience.

While this was proceeding here, Miss Æneasina Laxton, in an adjoining room, sat twanging the strings of a harp. On the other side her younger sister, Miss Magota, was spreading cakes of Reeve's water-colours upon sheet's of Whatman's paper, and dignifying the combination with the title of drawings: while, above stairs, young Smackerton William Longstaff was acquiring the art of horsemanship on a steed of wood; and the younger Longstaffs,—in whose diminutive persons the steward's family tapered off like a rat's tail,—were exercising with wooden swords, with a view to future eminence in the army; and, altogether, were making such disturbance in the house as rendered it a perfect Babel.

Into this noisy dwelling did Miss Sowersoft introduce herself; and, after having stood out with good pretended admiration Master Bolingbroke's lesson, eventually succeeded in obtaining a hearing from the happy parent of all this rising greatness.

The steward congratulated her upon the agreement she had made, but advised her to be very strict with the boy Colin, or in a very short time she would find him a complete nuisance.

"If you do not make something of him Miss Sowersoft," said he, "I am afraid he'll turn out one of that sort that a parish would much rather be without than see in it. He has some sense, as I told you yesterday, but that makes him the more mischievous. Sense is well enough amongst such families as mine, Miss Sowersoft, where parents have both money and discretion to turn it in the right channel, and direct it to proper ends; but I do conscientiously believe that when talent gets amongst poor people it plays the very deuce with them, unless it is grubbed up root and fibre by somebody who understands much better what is good for them than they can possibly know for themselves. If you do not hold a tight string over that boy Colin he'll get the upper hand of you, as sure as your head is on your shoulders. I should take no notice of him, nor encourage him in any way, more than I could possibly help. Bring him down as much as you can. It he should happen to drop off altogether, I do not think anybody would trouble himself much to inquire how it happened."

"You are right—very right!" exclaimed Miss Maria. "I am sure if you had actually known how he insulted me this morning to my face, though I was quite a stranger to him, you could not have said anything more true. It was lucky for him that Sammy did not hear it, or there would not have been a square inch of white skin left on his back by this

time. His mother cannot be any great shakes, I should think, to let him go on so."

"His mother!" cried Longstaff; "pooh! pooh! Between you and me, Miss Sowersoft,—though it does not do to show everybody what colour you wear towards them,—there is not a person in the world—and I ought not to say it of a woman, but so it is—there is not a single individual living that I hate more than I do that woman. She created more mischief in my family, and between Mrs. Longstaff and myself, some years ago, than time has been able altogether to repair. I cannot mention the circumstance more particularly, but you may suppose it was no ordinary thing, when I tell you, that though Mrs. Longstaff knows the charge to have been as false as a quicksand; though she has completely exonerated me from it, time after time, when we happened to talk the matter over; yet, if ever she gets the least out of temper, and I say a word to her, she slaps that charge in my face again, as though it were as fresh as yesterday, and as true as Baker's Chronicles."

"Ay, dear!" sighed Miss Maria, "I feared she was a bad one."

"She is a bad one," repeated Longstaff.

"And that lad is worse," added the lady: "However, we'll cure him, Mr. Longstaff."

Miss Maria Sowersoft laughed, and the steward laughed likewise as he added, that it would afford him very great pleasure indeed to hear of her success.

This matter being settled so much to their mutual satisfaction, Mr. Longstaff invited his visitor to join Mrs. Longstaff and her daughters, the Misses Laxton and Magota, over a plate of bread and butter, and a glass of port, which were always ready when the lessons of the morning were finished. This invitation, being the main end scope of her visit, she accepted at once: and after a very comfortable refection, rendered dull only by the absence of Samny, she took her leave. Shortly afterwards Miss Maria might have been seen again upon her pillion; while Mr. Palethorpe, mightily refreshed by the relishable drinks he had found at the tavern, trotted off his horse towards home at a round speed, for which everybody, save the landlady of the inn, who had kept his reckoning, was unable to account.

CHAPTER X.

A parting scene between Colin and Fanny, with the promises they made to each other. Colin sets out for his new destination.

SOMETHING closely akin to grief was visible in the little cottage at Bramleigh, even at daybreak, on that gloomy morning which had been fixed upon for Colin's departure. It was yet some hours before the time at which he should go; for his mother and Fanny had risen with the first dawn of light, in order to have every thing for him in a state of preparation. Few words were exchanged between them as they went mechanically about their household work; but each looked serious, as though the day was bringing sorrow at its close; and now and then the lifting of Fanny's clean white apron to her eyes, or the sudden and unconscious fall of big tears upon her hands, as she kneeled to whiten the little hearthstone of the house, betrayed the presence of feelings in her

bosom which put a seal upon the tongue, and demanded the observance of silence to keep them pent within their trembling prison-place. The mother, whose heart was more strongly fortified with the hope of her boy's well-doing, felt not so deeply, though the uppermost thoughts in her mind were yet of him, and of this change. To-morrow he would be gone. How she should miss his open heart and voluble tongue which were wont to make her forget all the miseries she had endured on his account! She would no longer have need to lay the nightly pillow for him; nor to call him in the morning again to another day of life and action. The house would seem desolate without him; and she and Fanny would have to learn how to be alone.

His little box of clothes was carefully packed up; and amongst them Fanny laid a few trifling articles, all she could,—which had been bought, unknown to any one, with the few shillings which had been hoarded up through a long season. These, she thought, might surprise him at some unexpected moment with the memory of home, and of those he had left there; when, perhaps, the treatment he might receive from others would render the memory of that home a welcome thing. A small phial of ink, three penny ready-made pens, and half a quire of letter-paper, formed part of Fanny's freightage: as she intended that, in case he could not return often enough on a visit to them of some few hours, he should at least, write to tell them how he fared.

When she was about completing the arrangements Colin entered the room, in high spirits at the anticipated pleasures of his new mode of existence.

"Is it all ready, Fanny?" he asked; at the same time picking up one end of the cord by which the box was to be bound.

"Yes," she briefly replied; accompanying that single monosyllable with a sudden and convulsive catching of the breath, which told of an overladen bosom better than any language.

"Then I shall go very soon," coolly observed Colin,—“there is no good in stopping if everything is ready.

"Nay, not yet," murmured Fanny, as she bowed down her head under the pretence of arranging something in the box, though, in reality, only to hide that grief which in any other manner she could no longer conceal. "We can't tell when we shall see you again. Do not go sooner than you can help, for the latest will be soon enough."

"What, are you crying?" asked Colin. "I did not mean to make you cry;" and he himself began to look unusually serious. "It is a good place, you know; and, if I get on well, perhaps when I am grown up I shall be able to keep a little house of my own, and then you, and my mother, and I, will live there, and be as comfortable as possible together. You shall be dairymaid, while I ride about to see that the men do their work; and as for my mother, she shall do as she likes."

Though not much consoled by this pleasing vision of future happiness, Fanny could not but smile at the earnestness with which Colin had depicted it. Indeed he could not have offered this balm to her wounded spirit with greater sincerity had such a result as that alluded to been an inevitable and unavoidable consequence of his present engagement at Snitterton Lodge, Whinmoor, the seat of Miss Maria Sowersoft. But Fanny had still less faith in the prognostications of her little seer, in consequence of the opinion which she had secretly formed of the character of his mistress; notwithstanding the plausibility of her conver-

sation. The natural expression of her countenance appeared to be that of clouded moroseness and grasping avarice; while a sort of equivocal crossing of the eyes, though only occasional, seemed to evince to those who could deeply read the human face divine, the existence of two distinct and opposite sentiments in her mind, to either of which she could, with equal show of truth, give utterance, as occasion might render necessary. Over all this, however, and as it were, upon the surface, her life of traffic with the world seemed to have rendered it needful for her to assume a character which too often enabled her to impose upon the really honest and innocent; though it never left, even upon the most unsuspecting, any very deep feeling of confidence in her integrity. Such, at least, were the impressions which Miss Sowersoft's appearance produced upon the mind of Fanny; though the latter made no other use of them than that of taking some little precautions, in order to be informed truly in what manner she and Colin might agree, which otherwise she would not have deemed at all needful.

"You will come over to see us every Sunday?" she asked.

"Yes, if they will let me," replied Colin.

"Let you!" But she suddenly checked herself. "And, if not, when they will not let you, you will be sure to write, Colin? Now promise me that. Or, if anything should be amiss—if you should not like the place, for there is no telling till you have tried it; if it *should* so happen that they do not use you so well as they ought to do, send, if you cannot come, directly; and, if there is nobody else to help you that is better able,"—Fanny stood up, and clasped both his hands with deep energy between her own—"I will stand by you as long as I live. I am not able to do much, but I can earn my living; and, if I work like a slave, you shall never want a farthing as long as I have one left for myself in the world! I have nursed you, Colin, when I was almost as little as yourself; and I feel the same to you as though your mother was mine too."

While Colin, with tears in his eyes, promised implicit compliance with all that had been requested of him, he yet, with the candour and warm-hearted generosity peculiar to his character, declared that Fanny ought to despise him for ever if he trusted to the labour of her hands for a single meal. No: he would save all his yearly wages, and bring them home for her and his mother; and in time he should be able to maintain them both by his own labour, without their having any need to struggle for themselves. As for the rest, if anybody ill-used him, he was strong enough to stand his own ground; or, if not, he knew of another way to save himself, which would do quite as well, or better.

"What other way? What do you mean?" asked Fanny, very anxiously.

"Oh, nothing," said Colin; "only, if people do not treat us properly, we are not obliged to stay with them."

"But you must never think of running away," she replied, "and going you do not know where. Come back home if they ill-treat you, and you will always be safe with us."

Their morning meal being now prepared, the three sat down to it with an undefined feeling of sadness which no effort could shake off. Some little extra luxury was placed upon the table for Colin; and many times was he made to feel that—however unconsciously to themselves—both his mother and Fanny anticipated all his slightest wants with unusu-

al quickness; and waited upon him, and pressed him to his last ill-relished meal, with a degree of assiduity which rendered the sense of his parting with them doubly painful.

The hour for going was at length arrived. At ten o'clock the village-carrier called for his little box; and at twelve Colin himself was to set out. The last half-hour was spent by his mother in giving him that impressive counsel which, under such circumstances, a mother best knows how to give; while Fanny stood by, weeping as she listened to it, and frequently sobbing aloud when some more striking observation, some more pointed moral truth, or apposite quotation from the sacred volume, escaped the mother's lips. Twelve o'clock struck. At a quarter past our hero was crossing the fields on the foot-road to Whinmoor; and at about three in the afternoon he arrived at the place of his future abode.

CHAPTER XI.

Describes the greeting which Colin received on his arrival at Snitterton Lodge; together with a very serious quarrel between him and Mr. Paletherpe; and its fearful results.

As Colin descended a gentle declivity, where the sterility of the moor seemed imperceptibly to break into and blend with the woods and the bright spring greenery of a more fertile tract of country, he came within sight of Miss Sowersoft's abode. Though dignified with the title of a seat, it was a small common farm-house, containing only four rooms, a long dairy and kitchen, and detached outhouses behind. To increase its resemblance to a private residence, a piece of ground in front was laid out with grass and flower-beds. The ground was flanked on either extremity with gooseberry-bushes, potato-lands, broad-beans, and peaprows; and, farther in the rear, so as to be more out of sight, cabbages, carrots, and onions. The natural situation of the place was excellent. Standing on the north side of a valley which, though not deep, yet caused it to be shut out from any distant prospect in consequence of the long slope of the hills, the little dwelling looked out over a homely but rural prospect of ploughed and grass land, and thick woods to the left: over which, when the light of the sun was upon it, might be seen the white top of a may-pole which stood in the middle of the next village; and, still nearer, the fruitful boughs of an extensive orchard, now pink and white with bloom; while along the foot of the garden plunged a little boisterous and headlong rivulet, worn deep into the earth, which every summer storm lashed into a hectoring fury of some few days' duration, and on the other hand, which every week of settled fair weather, calmed down into a gentle streamlet—now gathering in transparent pools where minnows shot athwart the sun-warmed water like darts of light; and then again stretching over fragments of stone, in mimic falls and rapids, which only required to be enlarged by the imagination of the listless wanderer, to surpass in picturesque beauty the course of the most celebrated rivers.

As Colin entered the garden-gate, he observed the industrious Mr. Paletherpe sitting against the western wall of the house—the afternoon being warm and inviting—smoking his pipe, and sipping the remains of a bottle of wine. With his legs thrown fully out, and his eyes nearly closed to keep out the sun, he appeared to be imbibing, in the most delicious

dreamy listlessness, at once the pleasures of the weed and the grape, and those which could find their way to his inapprehensive soul from the vast speaking volume of glad nature which lay before him.

"So, you're come, are you?" he muttered, without relieving his mouth of the pipe, as the boy drew near him.

"Yes, I am here at last," replied Colin; adding very good-humouredly, "you seem to be enjoying yourself."

"And what in th' devil's name is that to you?" he savagely exclaimed; "what business of yours is it what I'm doing?"

"I did not intend to offend you, I'm sure," said Colin.

"You be dang'd!" replied Sammy. "You arn't mester here yet, mind you, if you are at home! I have heard a bit about you, my lad; and if you don't take care how you carry yourself, you'll soon hear a bit about me, and feel it an' all, more than we've agreed for at present. Get into th' house with you, and let meesis see you're come."

The blood rose in Colin's face; and tears, which he would have given half his life to suppress, welled up in his eyes at this brutal greeting, so different to that which he had expected, and to the feelings of happiness which a few minutes previously had thronged, like bees upon a flower, about his heart.

As he passed the wire-woven windows of the dairy at the back of the house, he observed a maid within busily employed, in the absence of Miss Sowersoft, in devouring by stealth a piece of cheese.

Colin knocked at the door; but before the maid could swallow her mouthful, and wipe the signs thereof from her lips, so as to fit herself to let him in, an ill-tempered voice, which he instantly recognised as that of Miss Sowersoft, bawled out,

"Sally! why don't you go to the door?"

"Yes, 'um!" bellowed Sally in return, as she rushed to the place of entrance, and threw the door back.

"Is Miss Sowersoft at home?" asked the boy.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" cried his mistress from an inner room. "Come in, come in, and don't keep the door open half an hour, while I am in a perspiration enough to drown anybody!"

Colin passed through the kitchen into the apartment from which the voice had proceeded, and there beheld Miss Sowersoft, with a huge stack of newly-washed linen before her, rolling away at a mangle which occupied nearly one side of the room.

"Why didn't your mother send you at a more convenient time?" continued Miss Sowersoft, looking askance at Colin, with her remotest eye cast crosswise upon him most malignantly. "If she had had as much to do as I have had, ever since she kept house of her own, she would have known pretty well before now that folks don't like to be interrupted in the middle of their day's work with new servants coming to their places. But I suppose she had nothing to do but to pamper you all her life. I can't attend to you now;—you see I'm up to my neck in business of one sort or another."

So saying, she fell to turning the mangle again with increased velocity: so that, had our hero even felt inclined to make an answer, his voice would have been utterly drowned by the noise.

In the meant me Colin stood in the middle of the floor, doubtful what step to take next, whether into a chair or out of the house; but, in the lack of other employment, he pulled his cap into divers fanciful forms,

which had never entered into the head of its manufacturer, until at length a temporary cessation of his mistress's labours, during which an exchange of linen was made in the mangle, enabled him to ask, with some chance of being heard whether he could not begin to do something.

"I'll tell you what to do replied Miss Maria, "when I've done myself—if I ever shall have done; for I am more like a galley-slave than anything else. Nobody need sit with their hands in their pockets here, if their will is as good as their work. Go out and look about you;—there's plenty of stables and places to get acquainted with before you'll know where to fetch a thing from, if you are sent for it. And, if Sammy has finished his pipe and bottle, tell him I want to know what time he would like to have his tea ready."

Colin very gladly took Miss Sowersoft (who was more than usually sour, in consequence of the quantity of employment on her hands) at her word, and, without regarding her message to Sammy, with whom he had no desire to exchange another word at present, he hastened out of the house, and rambled alone about the fields and homestead until dusk.

Several times during this stroll did Colin consider and re-consider the propriety of waiving home again without giving his situation any farther trial. That Snitterton was no paradise, and its inhabitants a nest of hornets, he already began to believe: though to quit it even before a beginning had been made, however much of ill-promise started him in the face, would but indifferently accord with the resolutions he had formed in the morning, to undergo any difficulty rather than fail in his determination eventually to do something, not for himself only, but for his mother and Fanny. The advice which the former had given him not twelve hours ago also came vividly to his recollection; the sense of its truth, which experience was even now increasing, materially sharpening its impression on his memory. It was not, however, without some doubts and struggles that he firmly resolved to brave the worst,—to stand out until, if it should be so, he could stand out no longer.

Strengthened by these reflections, and relying on his own honesty of intention, our hero returned to the house just as all the labourers had gathered round the kitchen grate, and were consuming their bread and cheese in the dim twilight. Amongst them was one old man, whose appearance proclaimed that his whole life had been spent in the hard toils of husbandry, but spent almost in vain, since it had provided him with nothing more than the continued means of subsistence, and left him, when worn-out nature loudly declared that his days of labour were past, no other resource but still to toil on, until his trembling hand should finally obtain a cessation in that place which the Creator has appointed for all living. What little hair remained upon his head was long and white; and of the same hue also was his week's beard. But a quiet intelligent grey eye, which looked out with benevolence from under a white penthouse of eyebrow, seemed to repress any feelings of levity that otherwise might arise from his appearance, and to appeal, in the depth of its humanity, from the helplessness of that old wreck of manhood, to the strength of those who were now what once he was, for assistance and support.

"Ay, my boy!" said old George, as Colin entered, and a seat was made for him near the old man, "thou looks a bit different to me; though I knew the time when I was as bonny as thou art."

As he raised the bread he was eating to his mouth, his hand trembled like a last withered leaf, which the next blast will sweep away for ever. There was so much natural kindness in the old man's tone, that instantaneously, and almost unconsciously, the comparison between Miss Bowersoft and her man Samuel who had spoken to him in the afternoon, and poor old George, was forced upon Colin's mind. In reply to the old man's, concluding remark, Colin observed,

"Yes, sir, I dare say; but that is a long while ago now."

"Ay, ay, thou's right, boy,—it is a long while. I've seen more than I shall ever see again, and doue more than I shall ever do again."

Mr. Palethorpe, who sat in the home-made easy-chair, while the old man occupied a four-legged stool, burst into a laugh.

"You're right there, George," he retorted. "Though you never did much since I knowed you, you'll take right good care you do not do as much again. Drat your idle old carcase! you don't earn half the bread you're eating."

The old man looked up,—not angry, nor yet seeking for pity.

"Well, perhaps not; but it is none the sweeter for that, I can assure you. If I can't work as I did once, it's no fault of mine. We can get no more out of a nut than its kernel; and there's nought much but the shell left of me now."

"Yes, yes," returned Palethorpe, "you don't like it, George, and you'll not do it. Dang your good-for-nothing old limbs! you'll come to the work'us at last, I know you will!"

"Nay, I hope not," observed the old man, somewhat sorrowfully.—"I've lived out so long, and with God's blessing on my hands, though they can't do much, I shall manage to die out."

"Come, then," said Palethorpe, pushing a pair of hard clay-plastered quarter-boots from off his feet, "stir your lazy bones, and clean my boots once more before you put on the parish livery."

The old man was accustomed to be thus insulted, and because he dared not reply, to take insult in silence. He laid down the remaining portion of his bread and cheese, with the remark that he would finish it when he had cleaned the boots, and was about rising from his seat to step across the hearth to pick them up, as they lay tossed at random on the floor, when young Colin, whose heart had been almost bursting during this brief scene, put his hand upon the poor old creature's knee to stop him, and, at the same time starting to his own feet instead, exclaimed,

"No, no!—It's a shame for such an old man as you.—Sit still, and I'll do 'em."

"You shan't though, you whelp!" exclaimed Palethorpe in great wrath, at the same time kicking out his right foot in order to prevent Colin from picking them up. The blow caught him upon the nose, and a gush of blood fell upon the hearthstone.

"I will, I tell you!" replied Colin vehemently as he strove to wipe away the blood with his sleeve, and burst into tears.

"I'm d—d if you do!" said Palethorpe, rising from his chair with fixed determination. "I'll soon put you to rights, young busy-body."

So saying, he laid a heavy grip with each iron hand on Colin's shoulders.

"Then if I don't, he shan't!" sobbed Colin.

"Shan't he?" said Palethorpe, swallowing the oath which was upon his lips, as though he felt that the object of it was beneath his contempt.

"I'll tell you what, young imp, if you don't march off to bed this minute, I'll just take and rough-wash your nose in the horse pond."

Miss Sowersoft smiled with satisfaction, both at Sammy's wit and at his display of valour.

"Do as you like about that," replied Colin: "I don't care for you, nor anybody like you. I didn't come here to be beaten by you!"

Another burst of tears, arising from vexation at his own helplessness, followed these words.

"You don't care for me, don't you?" savagely demanded Palethorpe. "Come, then, let's try if I can't make you."

He then lifted Colin by the arms from the floor, with the intention of carrying him out. The farm labourers had hitherto sat by in silence, though with rising feelings of indignation.

"You shan't hurt him any more," cried old George, "or else you shall kill me first!"

"Kill you first, you old fool!" contemptuously repeated Palethorpe. "Why, if you say another word, I'll double your crooked old back clean up, and throw you and him an' all into th' brook together!"

"Then I'm danged if you do, and that's all about it!" fiercely exclaimed another of the labourers, striking his clenched fist upon his thigh, and throwing the chair on which he sat some feet behind him, in his sudden effort to rise. "If you dare to touch old George," he added, with an oath, "I'll knock you down, if I leave this service to-night for it!"

"Ay.—what you an' all, Abel!" cried Palethorpe, somewhat paler in the cheeks than he was sixty seconds before. "Why, what will you do, lad?"

"What will I do?" said Abel, "Why, if you don't set that lad loose, you cowardly brute, and sit down in quietness, I'll thump you into a jelly in three minutes!—Dang you! everybody hates you, and I'll tell you so now; for you're the biggest nuisance that ever set foot on a farm. 'Talk of that old man being idle!—why, what the deuce do you call yourself, you skulking vagabond? You never touch plough nor bill-hook once a-week, nor anything else that's worth a man's putting his hand to. Your business is to abuse everybody under you, and sneak after your missis's tail like a lick'd spaniel.—I wish I was your mester, instead of you being mine, I'd tickle your ears with a two inch ash plant every morning, but I'd make you do more in a day than you ever did in a week yet!"

A blow from Palethorpe's fist drove all further powers of oratory out of Abel, and caused him to stagger so suddenly backwards, that he would have fallen, had he not caught hold of the back of one of his comrades' chairs. All were now upon their feet; while Miss Sowersoft, who hitherto had sat petrified at the monstrous discourse of Abel, screamed out that whoever struck Sammy again should go out of the house that night. But as no one interfered farther in the quarrel, on the supposition that he was already pretty well matched, the penalty she had proclaimed amounted to nothing since it did not deter the only man who at that moment was likely to commit anything so atrocious. Abel had no sooner recovered his balance than he made a furious lunge at the head farming-man, which that hero attempted, but failed to parry. His antagonist, who, though less in weight, was yet tall and active, followed up his advantage; and, by a judicious and rapid application of his fists, he so far made good his former threat, as to give Miss Sowersoft's favourite two tremendous black eyes, and to plump his nose up to nearly double its original bulk and lustre, within sixty tickings of the clock. Miss Maria had now summoned the

maid to her assistance, and between them they succeeded in protecting Sammy from further vengeance. Nor did they find much difficulty in persuading that courageous man to sit down in his chair, and submit to a grand mopping with vinegar and hot water, which commenced as soon as active hostilities ceased, and did not conclude until nearly two hours afterwards.

Long before that time was expired, as no more comfort could be expected by the fireside that night, the rustics had moved quietly off to rest taking poor Colin along with them, and directing him to occupy one small bed which stood in a room containing two, and informing him at the same time, not much to his satisfaction, that Palethorpe always slept in the other. Old George shook hands with Colin at the door, bidding him good night, and God bless him; and telling him not to care for what had happened, as Heaven would reward his goodness of heart at a time when, perhaps, being old and feeble, he might most want a friend to help him. As the old man said this, his voice failed, and Colin felt a warm tear drop upon his hand as it remained clasped in that of the speaker.

Colin rushed into his room, and in great distress, resulting from the memory of all he had left behind, and the dread of all that might meet him here, he fell on his knees by the bed-side.

That night the voices of two lonely women, praying for the welfare of a still more lonely child, and of a child asking for help in his loneliness, ascended to heaven. Their hearts were comforted.

CHAPTER XII.

Briefly details a slight love-skirmish between Sammy and Miss Sowersoft, which took place before Colin, while that youth was supposed to be asleep, and also illustrates the manner in which old maids sometimes endeavour to procure themselves husbands.—Colin's employment at the Lodge.—He becomes involved in a dilemma, which threatens unheard of consequences.

AFTER Colin had spent some twenty minutes where we left him at the conclusion of the eleventh chapter, he crept into bed. The room in which he lay being partly in the roof, admitted only of a very small window in the upright portion of the wall, and that was placed so close to the floor as to throw very little light into the apartment, except during a strong day or moonlight.

The candle being extinguished, Colin could see nothing save a small square of dim light where the window was. Below stairs he could hear the muttering of voices, as Miss Sowersoft dabbed Palethorpe's eyes with her cloth and warm water; and in the false floor over his head, the sound of rats, who were at work in the roof, making noise sufficient over their labours to have kept awake, during the whole night, any person less accustomed to that kind of nocturnal entertainment than the inhabitants of country-houses usually are. Colin could usually have slept soundly had all the rats in Christendom been let loose in a legion about him, but he could not sleep to-night. It was pitch-dark; he was in a strange place, with brutal employers, who disliked him only because he had offered to relieve a poor old man of some portion of his labours. Who knew—for such things have been heard of, and passionate men often seek their revenge, regardless of consequences,—who knew, as Mr..

Palethorpe was to occupy the adjoining bed, that he might not take advantage of his sleep, and steal out in the night to murder him? He might do so, and then throw him down the brook, as he had threatened, or perhaps bury him deep in the garden, and say in the morning that he had run away.

With these, and similar imaginations, did Colin keep himself awake in a feverish state of terror during a space of time which to him seemed almost endless; for, however groundless and ridiculous such fears may be deemed by the stout-hearted reader who peruses this by broad daylight, he must be pleased to call to mind that poor Colin was neither of an age nor in a situation in which great account is commonly made of probabilities. The boy's fancies were at length interrupted by the appearance of something more real. A light shot through the chinks of the door, and ran an *ignis-fatua* kind of chase round the walls and ceiling, as it advanced up stairs in the hands of the maid Sally. Shortly afterwards the door was gently pushed open; and while Colin's heart beat violently against the bars of its cage, and his breath came short and loud; like that of a sleeper in a troubled dream, he saw a huge warming pan flaring through its twenty eyes with red hot cinders, protruded through the opening, and at the other end of the handle Miss Sally herself. She placed her candle down in the passage, in order to avoid awakening Colin with its light, and then commenced warming Mr. Palethorpe's bed with that peculiar skill and delicacy of touch, which at once betrayed the experienced hand of a mistress. By the time that operation was about finished, the feet of two other individuals creeping cautiously up were heard on the stairs. Then a voice whispered circumspectly, but earnestly,

"Now, Sammy, make haste and get in while it is nice and hot, or else it will do you no good: and in a minute or two I'll be up again with that warm posset, so that you can have it when you've lain down."

Sammy and Miss Sowersoft then entered, the latter having come up stairs, with no other intention, apparently, than that of frustrating by her presence any design which Palethorpe might else have had of rewarding Sally for her trouble with a gentle salute upon the cheek. Having seen the maid safe out of the chamber, Miss Maria returned down stairs.

Colin now began to tremble in earnest; for he distinctly heard Palethorpe muttering words of violence against every one of them without exception, and threatening to kick the house upside down before another day was over his head. By and by the cautious approach of his footsteps towards Colin's bed caused the boy to peep out through the meekest chink between his eyelids, when he beheld the hideous face of the fuming-man almost close to his own, with its huge swollen and blackened features fixed in an expression of deep malice upon him, and a ponderous clenched fist held threateningly near his face, as the horrible gazer muttered between his forcibly closed teeth.

"I'll pay you your wages for this, young man! I'll reckon with you in a new fashion before long! You shall repent this night to the last end of your life, that shall you! I could split your skull now, if you were not asleep. But you may rest this time!"

Saying which, he retired to bed. Immediately afterwards Miss Maria Sowersoft glided noiselessly in, with a huge basin of treacle-posset in one hand, and one of her own linen nightcaps, which she had been heating by the fire, in the other. This last-named article she at once proceed-

ed to place on Sammy's head, and tie under his chin; because the long tabs with which it was supplied, would cover his bruised face much better than any cap of his own. As Colin glanced from under the clothes, he could scarcely forbear laughing, in spite of his fears, at the odd combination which his mistress's Cupid suggested,—of a copper-coloured, black-bearded face, with the primly-starched, snowy frillings of a woman's nightcap.

"Is he asleep, Sammy?" asked Miss Maria in a low whisper.

"A deal faster than he deserves to be," replied that worthy.

"I will just step across, and see," observed the lady; and accordingly trod lightly over the floor in order to assure herself of the fact. Colin's closed eyes, his silence, and his quick full breathing, confirmed her in the pleasing delusion; and she returned to Palethorpe's bedside, and deposited herself in a chair with the remark that, under those circumstances, she would sit with him a few minutes. As she gazed with admiration on the uncouth countenance of Palethorpe, set, like a picture, in the white frame of her own cap; and watched him deliberately transfer spoonful after spoonful of the posset from the basin into the ill-shaped hole in his own face, she heaved a profound sigh, which seemed one moment to inflate her bosom like a balloon, and the next to collapse it again as closely as poor Cocking's parachute. Palethorpe went on with his posset.

"Ay, dear!" she sighed again.

"What's amiss, meesis?" asked Sammy, as soon as the emptied basin left him at liberty to speak.

"Nothing, Sammy,—nothing. Ay, dear! I'm quite well, as far as that goes," replied Miss Maria very despondingly.

"But you have summat not right, I'm sure," persisted he.

"Oh, it is of no matter!" she sighed again.

"But, what is it?" he a third time asked.

"It does not signify much," she again remarked; "it will be all the same a few years hence."

"You've tired yourself to death with that mangle, I suppose?" said Sammy.

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed in a tone of voice which betrayed some slight offence at the vulgarity of his suggestion; "it is a very different mangle to that. I'm sure I am mangled enough by people's indifference."

"Why, as for that," replied Sammy, trying to exculpate himself from any charge of neglect, "you are meesis of th' house, and don't want to be pressed to your meat and drink like a visiter."

"Meat and drink!" she exclaimed, as though indignant that such animal ideas should degrade the present elevation of her soul, "I care nothing about meat and drink, not I. You seem as if you could see nothing, though people make the plainest allusions that female propriety considers decent for any woman to do."

Mr. Palethorpe looked astonished as he observed,

"Well, I'm sure, meesis, you can't say that ever I made any allusions to female propriety."

"No,—that's it! there it is!" sighed Miss Maria; "though you get all the fat of the land, and are treated more like a gentleman in the house than like what you are, you never make the least allusions."

Palethorpe protested that under those circumstances he ought to feel.

all the more ashamed of himself if he did make allusions, or else other people would think it very odd of him.

"Oh, then the truth's out at last, is it?" said Miss Maria, "you have other people, have you? Ay, dear!" and she apparently fell a crying. "It's impossible, then, for all the goodness in the world to make any impression. Oh, Sammy—Sammy!"

Saying which she rose up, with her handkerchief to her eyes, and walked towards the door, muttering as she went, that since he seemed so very fond of other people, other people might feed him, as that was the last posset he would ever have from her hands. Mr. Palethorpe endeavoured several times to recall her, but Miss Sowersoft's new jealousy of other people had rendered her inexorable: and, in the course of a few more seconds her own chamber-door was heard to slam to, and to be most resolutely bolted and locked behind her. Our worthy uttered a discontented groan, and composed himself to sleep; an example which Colin was enabled some long time after to follow; though not before his weariness had completely overpowered his fears of danger from the savage sharer of his dormitory.

While yet in the middle of his slumber, and busy with a dream of home, which placed him again in the bright warm sunshine by the step of his mother's door, Colin was suddenly startled by the dragging of every inch of bed-covering from off him, and the not very sparing application of a hand-whip about his body, while the voice of Palethorpe summoned him, under the courteous title of a lazy heavy-headed young rascal, to turn out, and get himself off to work. It was nearly broad day-light: and our hero obeyed the summons with considerable alacrity, though not without informing his driver at the same time that there was no occasion for a whip to him, because a word would have done quite as well, if not better.

"Then you shall have both, to make sure, and plenty of them too," replied Mr. Palethorpe. "If long scores are ever to be cleared off, we should begin to pay 'em betimes; and I have a score chalked on for you that will want interest before it is discharged, I know. Mark, you will have this every morning regularly if you are not down stairs as the clock strikes six, neither sooner nor later. If you get up too soon, I shall lay on you just the same as if you got up too late,—for a right hour is a right hour, and six exactly is our time. I'll make you feel where your mistake was, my boy, when you thought of coming mester here! There's last night's job I owe you for yet, and a good price you shall pay for it, or else I don't know how to reckon!"

A blow on the right ear, and another on the left, immediately after, in order to keep his head in the middle, fell to Colin's lot at the conclusion of this harangue; and a push at the back of the neck which followed directly, enabled him to get out of the room somewhat more speedily than he would have done without that assistance. But to all this—though taken much in duceon—being mildness itself as compared with what might have been expected, Colin submitted in a sturdy mood, and without saying anything; though he did not forget to promise himself at some future day to adjust the balances between them.

In consequence of the lack-a-daisical turn which Miss Sowersoft's interview with Sammy had taken on the preceding night, that lady denied to the household the pleasure of her company at breakfast, as she could not meet the ungrateful Mr. Palethorpe before company again, until an

explanation in private had taken place. Poor old George all benignity, and looking like an elder of some by-gone age, seemed more than usually anxious to promote good feeling amongst his fellows, and to restore that harmony which had been destroyed the evening before, on his account. But Palethorpe was unforgiving, and Abel unrepentant: so, that, whatever might be the disposition of others, those two characters at least regarded each other over the table much in the same manner as, it might be supposed, would two of Mr. Wombwell's beasts placed on opposite sides of his menagerie, when before a meal-time they address each other in that language of the eyes of which poets speak, and seem to intimate a very unequivocal desire to dine upon one another.

That day Master Colin took his first lesson in field-craft, by being set to gather stones from off the wheat-sown lands, before the blade was more than an inch or two out of the ground. His out-door labours were concluded at six in the evening: after which time, as the horses remained to be put up, he was drilled in the art of cleaning, bedding, harnessing, and managing those animals: and, after that was done, he was allowed, by way of amusement, to spend the remaining few hours before bed-time in setting rat-traps, or accompanying some one or other of the men in weasel-shooting along the bank-sides and hedges.

Some few days elapsed without a reconciling ent having taken place between Palethorpe and his mistress; during which time our hero fared considerably better than otherwise he might have done; partly because Miss Sowersoft's attention was not now so completely engrossed as it had hitherto been, by her favourite; and partly because that very pleasant personage himself, while unsupported by the smiles and attentions of his mistress was by no means so formidable in his displays of courage as otherwise he would have been. The prospect which had broken on Colin's mind on his first introduction to Snitterton began accordingly to brighten considerably. He liked his employment in the fields, as well as all that followed it, so well, that, when on the ensuing Sunday he asked for leave to walk over to Bramleigh for the purpose of seeing his mother and Fanny, and was at once peremptorily denied, he felt that denial as no very great hardship; but soon made up his mind to spend the day as pleasantly as he could, and to write a letter to Fanny, detailing his thoughts and opinions, his likings and dislikings, instead.

These resolves he eventually put into execution: and, everything very probably might have gone on smooth enough, had not a circumstance utterly unforeseen, occurred, whereby he himself was brought into a second dilemma with his mistress and Palethorpe, still worse than the previous one; and whereby, also, the plain-spoken epistle which he had secretly indited for the private and especial perusal of his mother and Fanny, was in an evil hour, thrown into the hands of the identical parties about whom, in its honest simplicity, it told so many truthful lies. But the shame of Miss Sowersoft was so deep, and the rage of Palethorpe so high, and the consequences of both to our hero so important, that I verily believe it will occupy nearly the whole of the next chapter to describe them.

CHAPTER XIII.

Demonstrates, in the case of Miss Sowersoft and Mr. Samuel Palethorpe, the folly of people being too curious about the truth, in matters better left in the dark. Colin is subjected to a strict examination, in which the judge, instead of the culprit, is convicted. Colin's punishment.

THAT period of the year having now arrived when the days were materially lengthened, as well as increased in warmth, Colin selected an hour or two one evening after his day's labour was over, for the purpose of writing that letter to his mother and Fanny which he had projected some short time before. In order to do this, both by a good light, and away from the probability of intrusion, he selected a little spot of ground, formed by an obtuse angle of the brook, at the bottom of the garden; though divided from it by a thick clump of holly, intermingled with hawthorn and wild briar. On this grassy knoll he sat down to his task; making a higher portion of its slope serve as a natural table to hold his ink and paper.

Those vespers which Nature herself offers up to her Creator amidst the magnificent cathedral columns of her own tall trees; the loud songs of the blackbird and the thrush, and the occasional shrill cry of the discontented pewee as it swept in tempestuous circles over the distant arable land, were loudly heard around him: while, some two or three yards below the spot where he sat, a ridge of large stone, placed across the rivulet for the greater convenience of crossing, partly held up the water, and caused an eternal poppling murmur, as that portion which forced its escape between them, rushed with mimic velocity into the tiny gulf that lay some ten or twelve inches below. Colin felt elevated and happy. He could scarcely write many complainings there; although he had been so disappointed and ill-used on his arrival. At the same time he felt bound to tell the truth as far as it went, though not to represent himself as materially unhappy in consequence of the behaviour which had been adopted towards him. In this task, then he proceeded, until the hundreds of bright twinkling leaves which at first glittered around him in the stray beams of sunlight, had all resolved themselves into one mass of broad shade; to this succeeded a red horizontal light upon the upper portion of the trees to the eastward, as though their tops were tipped with fire; which also rapidly faded, and left him, by the time he had about concluded his letter, scarcely able any longer to follow with his sight the course of his pen upon the paper.

Having wrapped his epistle awkwardly up, he placed it in his pocket, and was about to emerge from his rural study, when the leisurely tread of feet approaching down the garden-path, and the subdued sound of tongues which he too well knew, caused him to step back, and closer to the clumps of holly, in the hope of getting away unobserved, when the individuals he wished to avoid had passed. They still continued to converse; and the first distinct words Colin heard were these:—

"I am sure, out of the many, very many excellent offers, I have had made me—excellent offers they were—I might have done so over and over again; but I never intended to be married. I always liked to be my own mistress and my own master; and, besides that, it does entail

so much trouble on people one way or another. Really, when I look on that great family of my brother Ted, I am fit to fancy it is pulling him down to the ground; and, I positively believe it would, if he did not take advantage of his situation in trade, and wrap and wring every farthing out of everybody in any way that he possibly can without being at all particular;—though they are sweet children, they are! Ay, but something must be risked, and something must be sacrificed; we cannot have it both ways—at least—a - humph!—I mean to say, that when people do get married, they must make up their minds to strike the best balance between them mutually that they are able. That is my candid opinion of things; and when I look upon them in that light—when I think about them in that manner, and say to myself, there is this on this side, and nothing on that side, which should I take? I lose my resolution—I don't know; I feel that, by a person to whom I had no objection in any other shape, I might, perhaps be superinduced to do as others have done, and to make a sacrifice of my little something, whatever it is, for the sake of spending our lives in that kind of domestic combination which binds people together more than anything else ever can. I am weak on that point, I know: but then, the home affections, as Mr. Longstaff says, constitute a very worthy and amiable weakness."

Miss Sowersoft uttered this last sentence in such a peculiar tone of self-satisfied deprecation, as evidently proved that she considered herself a much more eligible subject, on account of that identical weakness which she had verbally condemned, than she would have been if wholly free from it.

"Well, meesis," replied Mr. Palethorpe, with considerate deliberation, "I should have no objection to our union, if it so happened that we were not doing very well as we are at present; and while we are making a little money to put by every week, I think it is as well just now to let good alone. I should like—"

"Oh, you misunderstand me!" exclaimed Miss Maria; I did not make any allusions to you in particular. Oh, no! I have had very many most excellent offers, and could have them now for that matter; but then, you see, I was only just saying, as the thought came across my mind, that there is something to be said against being married, and something against keeping single. I remember the time when I could not bear the very thought of a man about me; but, somehow, as one gets older, we see so much more of the world, and one's ideas change almost as much as one's bodies; really, I am as different as another woman to what I once was. Somehow, I don't know how, but so it happens—Ah!" shrieked Miss Sowersoft, interrupting herself in the demonstration of this very metaphysical and abstruse point in her discourse, "take hold of me, dear,—take hold of me! I've trod on a toad, I believe!"

At the same time she threw her arms up to Mr. Palethorpe for protection; and, very accidentally, of course, they chanced to alight round that worthy's neck. A round dozen of rough-bearded kisses, which even he, stoic as he was, could not refrain from bestowing upon her, in order to revive and restore her spirits, smacked loudly on the dusky air, and set poor little Colin a-laughing in spite of himself.

"Who the deuce is that!" earnestly whispered the farming-man.—"There's somebody under the brook bank!" and, as he instantly disengaged Miss Sowersoft from his arms, he rushed round the holly-bushes, and caught fast hold of Colin, just as that unlucky lad was mak-

ing a speedy retreat across the rivulet into the opposite orchard. "What! it is you, you young devil, is it!" exclaimed he, in a fury, as he dragged the boy up the sloping bank, and bestowed upon him sundry kicks, scarcely inferior to those of a vicious horse, with his heavy, clench-nailed, quarter-boots. "You're listening after your meesis, now, are you? Dang your meddling carcass! I'll stop your ears for you!"

And, hug went his ponderous fist on Colin's organs of Secretiveness and Acquisitiveness, until his head sung again throughout, like a seething caldron.

"That's right!" cried Miss Sowersoft; "make him feel; drag him up; my face burns with shame at him; I'm as hot as a scarlet-fever, I am—a young scoundrel!"

And Colin was pulled up on to the level part of the garden, more like a half-killed rat than a half-grown human being.

"We'll know how this is, meesis," said Mr. Palethorpe, when he had fairly landed his cargo. "I'll see to th' bottom of it before he goes into th' house. He sha'n't have a chance of being backed up in his impudence as he was to her night."

"Take him into the thrashing-barn," advised Miss Sowersoft, "and we can have him there in private."

Colin now found breath to put in a protest against the bill of indictment which they were preferring against him.

"I was not listening," said he; "I was only writing a letter to my mother, I'm sure!"

"What! at this dark hour?" ejaculated Palethorpe with a laugh.—"Come along, you young liar! you sha'n't escape that way."

Accordingly he dragged the lad up the garden, and behind the house, into the spacious barn, of which Miss Sowersoft had spoken: and, while that innocent lady went to procure a lantern, her favourite held him tightly by the collar: save when, occasionally, to beguile the time until her return, he regaled him with a severe shake, and an additional curse or two upon his vagabond and mischievous carcass.

"Do you think he knows anything about it?" asked Miss Sowersoft aside to Palethorpe, as she entered the barn, and the dim light of her horn-lantern summoned to view the spectral appearances—rather than the distinct objects themselves—of various implements of husbandry, and of heaps of thrashed wheat and straw scattered around.

"Well, I don't know; but I should think not much," said he.

"I hope not," rejoined Miss Maria, "or it will get into everybody's mouth. But, we will question him very closely; we'll have it out of him by hook or by crook."

She then held a broken side of the lantern a little above Colin's face, in order to cast the better light upon it; and proceeded to question the culprit.

"Now, before I ask you a single question, promise to tell me the truth, and nothing but the truth. Now, mark; I shall know whether you speak the truth or not, so it will be of no use to try to deceive me. Tell me whether you heard me and Sammy talking in the garden; and whether you saw him pick me up so very kindly when I slipped down; and then tell me for what purpose you were standing behind those trees? No falsehoods, now. The truth, nothing else. Take care; because if you say anything untrue I shall know it directly; and then woe be to you for your trouble!"

"I always do tell the truth," replied Colin, crying, "without being frightened into it that way. I'm sure I had only been writing a letter to my mother and Fanny; and I stood there because I did not want anybody to catch me."

"And why did you not want anybody to catch you?"

"Why, because I didn't," answered Colin.

"Because you didn't!" exclaimed Sammy, as he emerged from out the shadow of Miss Sowersoft's figure; "what answer is that, you sulky ill-looking whelp? Give her a proper answer, or I'll send my fist in your face in a minute!"

Miss Maria put her hand on Sammy's arm to keep him back—not so much to prevent him carrying his threat into execution, as because his interference seemed to imply a doubt of her own abilities in warning all she wanted to know out of the boy before her.

"But *why* didn't you?" she asked again, more emphatically.

"Because, they might want to read my letter."

"Oh,—there's something in it, not to be seen is there?" continued the inquisitor, as her cheeks reddened with fears of she knew not what.

"It is all truth,—every word of it!" retorted Colin.

"Ay, ay, my lad, we must see about that. I cannot let you send a whole pack of falsehoods over to Bramleigh, and make as much mischief in my family as your mother made in Mr. Longstaff's. It is needful to look after your doings. Is the letter in your pocket?"

Having received an answer in the affirmative, she directed Palethorpe to search him for it; an operation which that amiable individual very soon concluded, by drawing the desired document from his trousers.

"Oh, this is it, is it?" said Miss Maria, as she partly opened it to assure herself. "Well, well," folding it up again: "we'll read this by and by. Now, what did you hear us talking about? If you say anything shameful, now,—and we shall know whether it is true or not, directly that we hear it,—if you do not say something—a—You know what Scripture tells you,—always to speak well of your mistress and master. Be careful now. What did we say?"

"Please, 'um," replied Colin, "you said, that when people get married they strike a balance between them: and that if one thing was on one side and nothing on the other, you should lose your resolution, and make a sacrifice of your little something, whatever it is."

"Oh, you little wretch!" ejaculated Maria. "Go on with your lies, go on! and you *shall* have it on your shoulders when you have done. What else, you vile toad?"

Colin stood mute.

"What next, I say!" stormed the lady, with a furious stamp of her right foot.

"Why, then, mum," added Colin, "I heard Palethorpe kissing you as hard as he could."

"Kissing me!—kissing me, you young rascal!" and the face of Miss Sowersoft became as red as the gills of one of her own turkey-cocks at the discovery. "If you dare to say such a thing as that again, I'll strip the very skin off your back,—I will, you caiff! Kissing *me*, indeed! A pretty tale to tell, as ever I heard!"

"I'm sure it's true," blubbered the boy; "for I heard it ever so many times."

"Oh!" exclaimed the virtuous Miss Sowersoft, "so we have got it

out of you at last. What!—your mother has sent you to watch your mistress, has she? That's all her schooling, is it? But Mr. Palethorpe shall learn you to spy about this house,—he shall, you dog!"

That worthy was now about to pounce upon his victim, but was again arrested by his mistress.

"Stop, stop!—we have not done yet," pulling the letter before mentioned from her bosom; "there is a pretty budget here, I'll be bound to say. After such as this, we may expect anything. There is nothing too bad for him."

While Palethorpe held the culprit fast by one hand, and the lantern in the other, he and Miss Sowersoft enjoyed the high gratification of perusing together the authenticated letter which follows:—

"DEAR MOTHER AND FANNY,

"As I promised to write if they would not let me come on Sunday, which they did not do, I take this opportunity after tea to tell you all about it. I like this house very well, and have caught fourteen rats with traps of my own setting besides helping Abel to shoot snoodards, which he fired at, and I looked on while. I can harness a horse and curry him down already. But when I first got here I did not think I should like it at all, as Palethorpe flew at me like a yard-dog because I spoke to him, and Miss Sowersoft was mangling, and as cross as patch. I did think of coming home again; but then I said to myself, 'Well, I'll lay a penny if I do, mother will send me back; so it will be of no use, and I shall have my walk for nothing.' I do not like mistress a bit. When she was at our house, she told you a pack of the biggest fibs in the world. I never heard of a bigger fibber than she is, in my life; for all the good victuals she made such a bother about are made up for Samny, and I have to eat his leavings. He is like a master-pig in a sty, because he crunches up the best of every thing. Mistress seems very fond of him, though; for after we had had a shin ly the first night, and Palethorpe made my nose bleed, I went to bed, and saw her tie her nightcap on his head, and feed him with a posset. I could not help laughing, he looked such a fool. Then I heard her courting him as plain as sunshine; for she tries as hard as she can to get him to marry her; but I would not have her, if I were him, she is so very mean and pretending. But then he is a savage idle fellow himself; and as Abel said to him, said he, 'You never touch plough nor bill hook once a-week.'—no more he does.—Our mistress backs him up in it, and that is the reason, I shall come over as soon as I can, as I want to see you and Fanny very much.

"Yours affectionately,

"COLIN CLINK."

At all events the murder was out here, and no mistake. The letter dropped from Miss Sowersoft's hand, and she almost fainted in Mr. Palethorpe's arms, as she faintly sighed,

"Oh, Samny, Samny! he'll be the death of me!"

When Miss Maria was somewhat recovered, Palethorpe turned in great wrath towards Colin, uttering a more fearful assertion than I can repeat, that if he could make no better use than that of his eyes when he went to bed, he would knock them out of his head for him. Seizing the boy ferociously by the nape of the neck with one hand, and a portion of his clothes with the other, he lifted him up from the ground, like

a dog by head and tail, and carried him straight into the yard, dashing him violently into the horse-trough, very much to the satisfaction of the indignant Miss Sowersoft, who had suddenly recovered on beholding this spectacle, and followed her favourite with the lantern. While Palethorpe held him down in the trough, Miss Sowersoft proceeded with great alacrity to pump upon him very vigorously until her arms were tired.

The boy's cries soon brought several of the domestics of the establishment together. Sally rushed out of her kitchen inquiring what Colin had done to be ducked.

"Spying after the private things of meesis!" exclaimed the wrathful Mr. Palethorpe.

"Spying!" echoed the maid.

"Yes, spying!" added Maria, in corroboration of Palethorpe's statement. "We have caught him out, according to his own confession, spying after the secrets of everybody about the premises, and sending it all in writing to his mother."

"Ay! I'd souse him well!" observed Sally, who began to fear that some of her own secret interviews with Abel had very probably been registered in black and white, for the edification of the good people of Bramleigh.

"What has he been a-gate of?" asked Abel, who had just come up in time to catch the end of the above conversation.

"Oh, he's been watching you come into the dairy when I was there!" added Sally, accompanying her remark with a broad simper, and a sly blushing glance at Abel, which caused Abel to shuffle on his feet, and dangle his legs about, as though at a loss what to do with them.

"Then a sheep-washing will do him no harm for sheep's eyes," rejoined Abel, rounding off his sharp-pointed wit with a broad laugh.

When the ducking was concluded, they drove him, bruised, drenched, and weeping, into the kitchen. Old George, who had been a distant and silent spectator of the scene, stood at the door as he entered.

"Ay, poor boy!" said he pityingly, as the child passed by him "they'd more need to nurse him by the fireside than half drown him this way. It's sad wages—sad wages, indeed, for a nest-babe like him! But they don't heed what I say. I'm an old man, and have no right to speak."

Miss Sowersoft seized the earliest opportunity she could to place Colin's letter upon the fire, which she did with a spoonful of salt upon it, in order that the flames should be of the same colour as its contents.

In the meantime Colin had shuffled off his mortal coil of wet clothes, and in a moist skin gone silently off to bed. At supper-time old George carried him up a pint of warm ale which had been served out for himself. Colin accepted it less because he relished it, than because he knew not how at the moment to refuse the hand by which it was offered; and within ten minutes afterwards, notwithstanding all his troubles, he fell into a sound state of repose.

COLIN CLINK.

CHAPTER XIV.

The benefits of being roused in a horse-trough.—Some farther specimens of Miss Sowersoft's moral excellence.—An unlooked-for discovery is partially made, which materially concerns Miss Fanny Woodruff and Doctor Rowel.

On the following morning Palethorpe arose, and finding Colin still asleep, was proceeding, whip in hand, to help him up according to custom, when, as he turned down the clothes that almost enveloped the child's head, the unusual appearance of his countenance arrested the man's attention as well as his hand. His veins were swollen with rapid bounding blood, and his heart thumped audibly in its place and with doubly accelerated motion, as though eagerly hastening to beat out its appointed number of pulsations, and leave the little harassed life it contained again free from the pains and vexations of this lower world.

A blush of remorse passed for a moment over the man's dark countenance as he gazed. What had they done to him?—what was amiss? He covered the boy carefully up again, and hastened down stairs to communicate the news to Miss Sowersoft.

"Oh,—it's all nonsense!" she exclaimed, on hearing all that Mr. Palethorpe had to say about it. "The lad's got a bit of a cold,—that's all. I'll make him a basin of milk, with a little of that nice feverfew out of the garden boiled in it, and then if you wake him up, and let him take that, it will stick to his ribs, and do him an amazing deal of good."

But as there was no hurry about such a matter, Miss Maria very leisurely took her own breakfast before she set about carrying her very charitable project into execution. When the milk, with some sprigs of feverfew boiled in it, was ready, Sally was sent up stairs with it. She found Colin awake, but weak and ill: and, much to her surprise, on presenting him with a lump of bread and the basin of milk, which more closely resembled a light green wash for stencilling walls, than any true Christian dish, he could neither touch nor bear the sight of either.

"La!" cried Sally, "why I never heard anything like it, as to neither eat nor drink! Come, cram a bit down your throat with your finger, and see if it will not get you an appetite. Why, I can eat and drink very well, and why shouldn't you? Come, come,—don't be soft, and refuse what Goramighty sends you, while it lies in your power to get it. I'm sure this milk is very nice, indeed."

In corroboration of her statement she took a sip. But Colin shook his head feebly and heavily, and declared it would do him no good. He could take nothing—he wanted nothing, but to be left alone, that he might think and wish, and weep as he thought and wished, that he were but once more at home, or that his mother or Fanny were but with him.

Shortly after Sally had returned below stairs, and communicated the astounding intelligence that Colin would take neither bit nor sup, Miss Sowersoft herself crept up stairs. She assured him he had plenty of colour in his face; that there could not be anything particularly amiss with him; advised him against putting on pretences of sickness, lest he should be struck with sickness in reality as a judgement on him, like the children that mocked the prophet Elijah, and were eaten up by bears; and concluded by insinuating, that if he were tickled with a whip-thong, he would in all probability be a great deal better directly.

"Send me home!" bitterly ejaculated Colin, bursting into tears. "Put me in a cart, and send me home!—I want to go home!—I must go home!—Mother!—Fanny!—Oh, come to me!—I shall die—I shall die!"

Miss Sowersoft felt rather alarmed; but reflecting that there was nothing like showing a little spirit and resolution when young folks took such whims as those into their heads, she severely taunted him with being home sick and mother-sick; told him that neither she nor Fanny, if they were present, could do more for him than she could; and threatened that, if he did not leave off that hideous noise, which was disgraceful to a great lad of his age, she would tie a stocking round his mouth, and stop him that way. There being no great consolation in all this, it is not surprising that our hero made such slight application of it, that, for the matter of any difference it made in him, Miss Sowersoft might just as well have tied her stocking across her own mouth, or stuffed it in either, which ever she might prefer, as have given utterance to it. She was therefore constrained to submit to the lad's own way, and to confess in her own mind that there really was something more amiss with him than at first she had believed.

By mid-day he had become a great deal worse; and in the afternoon, as his disorder still rapidly increased, Mr. Palethorpe was despatched on horseback to Bramleigh, for the purpose of consulting Dr. Rowel.

About six o'clock in the evening he returned home, bringing with him a packet of white powders in little blue papers, tied together much in the fashion of that little pyrotechnic engine of mischief usually denominated a cracker.

Certain fears, which had by this time crept over the mind of Miss Sowersoft caused her to be more than usually charitable and eager in her inquiries after the doctor's opinion about Colin; but the answers she received were neither very conclusive nor very satisfactory. She was, in fact, obliged to seek for consolation, for the present, in the belief, which she struggled hard to impress firmly upon herself, that the boy's illness had arisen wholly in consequence of his sitting on the ground so late in the evening to write his letter; and that his subsequent sousing in the horse-trough had no connexion whatever with it; as he might very easily have fallen accidentally into a river instead, and received no more harm from it than he had from the aforesaid pumping.

During several subsequent days, the boy continued in such a state as filled his mistress's heart with continual apprehensions lest her house should eventually be troubled with his corpse. About his death, considering that event solely by itself, she cared very little; he might live or die, just as his constitution inclined him, for aught she would choose between the two; only, in case he should not survive, it would annoy her very much indeed to have all the trouble of getting another body's corpse prepared for the ground, without, in all likelihood, ever receiving from Mrs. Clink a single halfpenny in return for it. She mentioned her apprehensions to Mr. Palethorpe, who replied, that it was all silly childishness to allow herself to be imposed on by her own good feelings, and that talk about humanity would never do for folks so far north as they were. On this unquestioned authority Miss Sowersoft would inevitably have acted that very day, and removed our hero, at any risk, to Bramleigh, in order to give him a chance of dying comfortably at home, had not fortune so ordered it, that while preparations were being made for taking him from a bed of fever into an open cart which stood ready in the yard, Dr. Rowel chanced to ride up, and at once put his veto upon their proceedings. Not

that the doctor would by any means have purposely ridden half the distance for the sake of such a patient; but as chance not unfrequently favours those whom their own species despise, it happened that his professional assistance had that afternoon been required in the case of a wealthy old lady in the neighbourhood; and as the doctor's humanity was not, at all events, so very short legged as not to be able to carry him one quarter of a mile when it lay in his way, he took Snitterton Lodge in his circuit, for the sake of seeing Master Colin.

It will readily be supposed that during these few days, (as the boy had not made his appearance at home on the previous Sunday, according to conditional promise,) both his mother and Fanny had almost hourly been expecting to hear from him. Nor had various discussions on the cause of his silence been by any means omitted. Mrs. Clink attributed it to the fact of his having found everything so very pleasant at Snitterton Lodge, that he really had had neither time nor inclination to wean himself for a few short hours from the delights with which he was surrounded; but Fanny, whose mind had been dwelling ever since his departure upon the dismal forebodings with which Miss Sowersoft's appearance had filled it, expressed to Mrs. Clink her full belief that something had happened to Colin or he would never have neglected either to come himself, or to write as he had promised.

"I am sure," she continued, very pensively, "it has made me so uneasy all this last week, that I have dreamed about him almost every night. Something has happened to him, I am as certain as if I had seen it; for I can trust to Colin's word just as well as though he had taken his oath about it. However, I will walk over this afternoon and see; for I shall never rest until I know for a certainty."

"Walk, fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Mrs. Clink. "If you go over there in that suspicious manner, as though you fancied they had murdered him, it is a hundred to one but you will affront Miss Sowersoft, and get Colin turned out of a situation that may be the making of him. Stay where you are—do; and if you cannot make anything, do not mar it by interfering in a matter that you know nothing about. I have had trouble enough with him one way or another, without his being brought back on my hands, when he is as comfortable. I dare say, as he possibly can be."

Though the latter remark was evidently intended to apply to Fanny's supposed injudicious solicitude for Colin's welfare, the girl passed it by without observation. She hurried her day's work forwards, in order to gain the necessary time for making her projected visit; and at about the middle of the afternoon suddenly disappeared from the eyes of Mrs. Clink, without informing her previously touching her place of destination.

While Dr. Rowel was yet in attendance on Colin, Fanny arrived, and introduced herself to Miss Sowersoft, as she was employing herself in picking the pips off a handful of cowslips which lay in her lap. On seeing Fanny thus unexpectedly, and under circumstances which she felt would require some very ingenious explanation or evasion, her countenance seemed to darken as though a positive shadow had been cast upon it. A struggle between her real feelings and her consciousness of the necessity to disguise them ensued; and in the course of a few brief seconds the darkness of her countenance passed away, and she affected to salute her unwelcome visitor with much cordiality.

In reply to Fanny's inquiry respecting Colin, Miss Maria stated that he was improving very nicely under Mr. Palethorpe's tuition, although they had had some trouble to make him do as he was bid; that he had enjoyed the most extraordinary good health until a few days ago, when he took a little cold, which had made him rather poorly.

"There!—I was sure of it," cried Fanny, interrupting her; "I said so to his mother before I came away. I knew there was something amiss, or he would have written to us before now. And how did he take such a cold, Miss Sowersoft?"

"Take cold!—why, you know there are a hundred different ways of taking cold and it is impossible sometimes for even a person himself to say how he took it. I am sure Palethorpe gets tremendous colds sometimes, and how he gets them is a perfect miracle. But, on my word, cold is so insinuating, that really, as I say sometimes, there is not a part but it will find its way to at one time or another.

"Yes—but where is Colin now?—because I shall want to see him before I go back."

"Oh, he is somewhere about the house," replied Miss Maria, with an unprecedented degree of affrontery; "but your seeing him is not of the least consequence. It cannot cure his cold; and as for anything else, it would very likely make him all the more discontented when you were gone again. If you take my advice, you would not see him, especially when I can tell you everything just the same as though you saw it yourself."

At this moment the foot of the doctor, as he groped his way down stairs, was overheard by the speaker. She started up instantly, and endeavoured to hurry Fanny out of the room before that professional gentleman should enter it; but her manœuvre failed, and before Miss Sowersoft could caution him to be silent, the doctor remarked, in a sufficiently loud tone to be heard distinctly by both, that unless the boy was taken great care of, there was little chance left of his recovery.

"What boy?" exclaimed Fanny, rushing forward. "What! is he so ill as that? For God's sake let me see him!"

Concluding from the direction in which the doctor had come that Colin was somewhere in the regions above, she flew rather than walked up stairs, without waiting for an invitation or a conductor, and soon threw her arms in a ecstasy of grief upon his neck.

"Oh, Colin! God has sent me on purpose to save you! Do be better, and you shall go home again very soon."

"But Colin could only put up his pallid arms in an imploring action, and cry for very joy; as he gazed in the face of one of those only two who had occupied his day and night thoughts, and been the unconscious subjects of his unceasing and most anxious wishes.

The trouble of this first meeting being over, some more quiet conversation ensued; and, although almost too ill and weak to be allowed to talk, Colin persisted in stating briefly to the horror-stricken Fanny the kind of reception he had met with on his arrival, his treatment afterwards, the taking of his letter from him, and the brutal conduct which had caused his present illness. The girl stood silent, merely because she knew not what to think, what to believe, what to doubt; and was besides utterly lost for words to express properly her strangely mingled thoughts. It was almost impossible—incredible! Why could they do it? There was no cause for it—there *could* be no cause for it. Human nature, and

especially human nature in the shape of woman, was incapable of anything so infamous. Yet Colin was sensible—he had told an intelligible tale; and, most true of all, there he lay, a mere vision of what he was so brief a time ago,—a warranty plain and palpable that grievous wrong had been endured. Her brain was absolutely bewildered—she looked like one hovering on the doubtful boundary between sense and insanity. She cast her eyes around for surety—on the bed—at him. A burst of tears, as of a spring that for the first time breaks its bound, succeeded,—and then another and another, as she fell on her knees and buried her face in the clothes that covered him.

By and by, the doctor and Miss Maria were present in the room with her. Fanny raised her head and beheld Colin's mistress attempting in the presence of the doctor, to do the attentive, by adjusting the sheet about the boy's neck to keep off the external air.

"Do not touch him!" exclaimed Fanny, springing to her feet; "he shall have nothing from your hands, for you are a disgrace to the name of a woman!"

"Av!" cried the doctor: "young woman, what now, what now?"

"What now? Sir, you may well say *what now!* I have heard all about it—he has told me all—and I say that woman shall not touch him while I am here. She has nearly killed him, and now wants to show, because *you* are here, how kind and good she is!"

So saying, Fanny resolutely set about making the arrangement which Miss Sowersoft had contemplated with her own hands.

"Why—what—who is this young woman?" asked the doctor, somewhat astonished at the unexpected scene which had just passed before him.

"Nobody?" replied Miss Sowersoft; "she is only Mrs. Clink's servant, and a pert impudent hussey too."

At the same time she looked in the doctor's face, and endeavoured to smile contemptuously, though it "came off" in such a manner as would inevitably have frightened anybody less accustomed than was Dr. Rowel to witness the agonies of the human countenance.

"Yes, sir," added Fanny, "I am only a servant; but I am a woman whether servant or mistress. I nursed this lad when I was but six years old myself, and have taken care of him ever since. She shall not drown him like a blind puppy, though she thinks she will!"

"Drown him!" exclaimed Miss Sowersoft in feigned amazement.

"Yes," replied Fanny, "*you* drown him. If you had not half murdered him in that trough, he won't never have been here now."

"Do let us go down stairs, doctor," observed Miss Sowersoft; "it is not worth hearing such rubbish as this." And she made her way towards the door.

"Where is that letter?" cried Fanny eagerly, fearful lest the lady to whom she addressed herself should escape.

"Pshaw! nonsense! don't catechise me!" replied Miss Sowersoft, as she tripped down stairs; while the doctor half in soliloquy and half addressing Miss Sowersoft, remarked, in allusion to Fanny.

"She's a damsel of some spirit too!" Then addressing the girl herself, "Are you the little girl I saw at Mrs. Clink's when this boy was born?"

"Yes, sir, I am," answered Fanny, as her passion sunk almost to nothing, and she blushed to be so questioned.

"Ah, indeed!" cried Doctor Rowel. "Well, I should not have thought it. Why, you are quite a fine young woman now. Dear-ame! I had quite lost sight of you. I could not have believed it. Humph!" And the doctor surveyed her fair proportions with something of astonishment, and a great deal of satisfaction. To think that from such a little, pale, half-fed, unhappy thing of work and thought beyond her years as she then was, there should have sprung up the full-sized, the pretty featured, and naturally genteel-looking girl now before him! But then, he had not that benefit which the reader enjoys, of reflecting how worldly circumstances, how poverty and plenty, sway the tempers of mankind; and that, as Mistress Clink's circumstances improved, so had Fanny improved likewise; and from seven or eight years old upwards, Fanny had enjoyed a much more comfortable home than, on his first introduction to her might reasonably have been expected.

Lest the reader should unnecessarily marvel how her individuality should have been unrecognised by the physician, I beg to inform him, that while the person of every great man is as familiar to all the poor eyes of the neighbourhood as though he were their born and natural uncle, he himself remains as much in the dark as to the identity of every poor face he meets, even though he chance to meet it every day, as though he had never seen it once in the whole course of his life.

Doctor Rowel resumed his conversation.

"And, how came you to be put to service so very early? for you had not, if I remember rightly, neither health nor strength to recommend you."

Colin's eyes as he lay were fixed, as it might have been the eyes of a picture, on the doctor's countenance.

"I don't know I'm sure, sir," replied Fanny; but after a few moments' hesitation, added, "I suppose it was because I had no friends."

"No friends," the doctor repeated,—“why, where were your father and mother?”

"I never knew them, sir."

"Indeed! never knew them!"

"No, sir!" and Fanny sobbed at the very recollection of her childhood's helplessness.

"Humph!" ejaculated the doctor; "you scarcely seem to have been born for a servant. Where did Mrs. Clink find you?"

"I do not know, sir. She never told me."

"Ah!—oh! oh!—well! It's odd she never told you. So you do not know either who your father, or your mother, or your friends were?"

"No, sir,—I do not. But I remember——"

"Well,—go on,—you remember,—what do you remember? where did you come from? Do you know that?"

"I think, from Leeds, sir."

"Leeds!" exclaimed the doctor; "and what else now do you remember?"

"I can remember, sir,—though I but just remember it,—that my father was taken away from me once, and I never saw him again."

"And, what's your name?" continued the doctor, in evident excitement.

"Fanny Woodruff," she replied.

The doctor's features looked pale and rigid, and his eyes were fixed almost immovably upon her.

"God bless my soul!" he slowly ejaculated, as he rose to leave the room; "she should have been lost, or dead!"

But he turned again when at the head of the stairs.

"Now, young woman,—if you can keep a secret,—tell nobody, not even your mistress, what has passed. Take no notice; and perhaps, I may do something for you. But I thought we had seen the last of your face seventeen years ago!"

Fanny and Colin were left alone.

"He knows something about me!" was the first thought that arose in Fanny's mind. But she did not utter it, and only asked very softly, if Colin had heard what the doctor said.

"Yes," he replied, "and I shall never forget it."

"But, say nothing," added the girl: "he promised to do something for me. I wonder what it is!"

"So do I," added Colin: "something worth having, I dare say."

Thus they talked till evening. Colin said how much better he felt since she had been with him; and Fanny declared she would not leave him again for another day, until he was well; and when he was well, then she would get him away from such unfeeling people, even though she had to go down on her knees to beg another situation for him elsewhere.

When, some little time afterwards, Fanny went down stairs, and informed the mistress of the house of her resolution to stay and attend on Colin until he was better, that amiable creature replied,

"I think you won't, then. We have not any room to spare. As if I was going to keep beds at liberty, to accommodate any truncheon that may think fit to cram herself into my house! We've plenty of work on our hands without having to wait on other people's servants. What do you say, Sammy?"

"Well, I don't know, meesis," replied Mr. Palethorpe; "it seems as if Dr. Rowel was understood to say he was very bad, and must be waited on pretty constantly."

"I'm sure I shan't wait on him neither constantly nor inconstantly!" very pertly exclaimed Miss Sowersoft; and, certainly giving a very ingenious turn to her own views, as soon as she found which way her lover's needle pointed; "I'm not going to trot up and down stairs a thousand times a day for the sake of such a thing as a plough-lad. Them may wait on him that likes him, if he is to be waited on; but I'm positive I shan't, nor anybody else that belongs to me!"

This conclusion left, without another word, the field wholly open to Fanny; and, as Miss Sowersoft, on concluding her speech, bounced off into the dairy, not another word was needed.

Whatever might be the views entertained by the lady of the house, touching the treatment most proper for Colin, there still were individuals amongst that rude community, whose feelings were of a somewhat more Catholic kind than those of their mistress; so that Fanny found no difficulty in procuring a volunteer in the person of Abel, to go over to Bramleigh for the purpose of informing Mistress Clink how affairs stood, and of bringing back such few needful articles as Fanny might require during her stay at the farm.

All that night she passed a sleepless watch by the side of Colin's bed, beguiling the hours not devoted to immediate attendance on him, partly by looking over the little books which had come from home in his box,

but more by employing her mind in the creation of every possible description of fanciful suppositions touching her own origin, her history, her parents, and the knowledge which the doctor appeared to have of her earliest life. What was it?—what could it be? and, what could he mean by enjoining her to mention nothing of all this to any second person? In her he had unexpectedly found one whom he had known a baby, and had believed to be dead, or lost in the vast promiscuous crowds of poverty long ago. Had she been born to better things than surrounded her now? Had she been defrauded of her rights? And, did the doctor, bid her be silent because he might have to employ stratagem in order to recover them again? Perhaps she was born—nay! she knew not what she was born; nor dare she trust herself to think, scarcely; though certain it is that a visionary world of ladies and gentlemen, and fine things, and wealth to set Colin up in the world and to make his mother comfortable, and to exalt herself over all the petty enemies by whom they were now surrounded, passed in pleasant state before her prolific imagination; while, it is equally certain, that—blushing, though unseen, and in secret at the very consciousness,—a prouder feeling sprung up in her bosom, and she began to feel as though she must be more genteel, and more particular, and less like a common servant, than she had hitherto been.

Such were the golden fancies, and the pretty resolves, that crowded round her brain that night. Neither, as an honest chronicler of human nature, would I take upon me to assert that she did not once or twice during these reveries rise to contemplate her own features in the glass, and to adjust her hair more fancifully, and wonder—if it should be so,—what kind of looking lady she would make. Truly, it was a pretty face that met her eyes in the mirror. As Colin woke up from a partial slumber, and raised his head slightly from the pillow, to see for his guardian, and to ascertain what had become of her, the reflection of her countenance as she was “looking the lady,” chanced to catch his eye: and though he smiled as he gently sunk down again, he thought that that face would never again pass from before him.

CHAPTER XV.

Fanny is deceived by the doctor.—A scene in Rowel's “Establishment for the insane” at Nabbfield.

Poor girl! What pains she takes—if not to “curse herself,” at least to form that paradise out of the chaos of her own thoughts, which her supposed benefactor, the physician, never intended to realize. She was deceived, utterly and deeply deceived; and deceived, too, by the very means which the doctor had recommended to her apparently for the attainment of success. For, great as some of our modern diplomatists have incontestably been considered in the noble and polite art of deception, I much question whether the man more capable of aspiring to higher honours in it than was Dr. Rowel of Nabbfield, is not yet to be born.

As the Doctor rode homewards, after his interview with Fanny, recorded in the preceding chapter, true enough it is that he did several times over, and with inexpressible inward satisfaction, congratulate and compliment himself upon having achieved such a really fine stroke of

policy at a very critical moment, as no other man living could, he verily believed, have at all equalled. Within the space of a few brief moments he had, to his infinite astonishment, discovered, in the person of a serving-girl, one whom he himself had endeavoured, while she was yet an infant, to put out of the way: and upon whose father he had perpetrated one of the most atrocious of social crimes, for the sole purpose of obtaining the management of his property while he lived, and its absolute possession on his disease. He had ascertained that the girl retained some indistinct recollection of the forcible arrest and carrying away of her parent, of which he himself had been the instigator; and thus, suddenly he found himself placed in a position which demanded both promptitude and ingenuity in order to secure his own safety and the permanency of all he held through this unjust tenure. Since any discovery by Fanny of what had passed between them would inevitably excite public question and inquiry, the very brilliant idea had instantaneously suggested itself to his mind that—as in the girl's continued silence alone lay his own hopes of security,—no project in the capacity of man to conceive was more likely to prove successful in obtaining and preserving that silence, than that of representing it as vital to her own dearest interest to keep the subject deeply locked for the present in her own bosom. This object, he flattered himself, he had already succeeded in achieving, without exciting in the mind of Fanny herself the least suspicion of his real and ultimate purpose. At the same time he inwardly resolved not to stop here, but to resort to every means in his power calculated still more deeply to bind the unsuspecting young woman to the preservation of that silence upon the subject, which, if once broken, might lead to the utter overthrow of a system which he had now maintained for years.

Elated with the idea of his own uncommon cleverness, he cantered along the York road from the moor with corresponding briskness; turned down a green lane to the left; cleared several fences, and a pair of gates in his progress; and reached within sight of his "Establishment for the Insane" at Nabbfield, as the last light of another unwished-for and unwelcome sun shot through the barred and grated windows of the house, and served dimly to show to the melancholy inhabitants of those cells the extent of their deprivations and their misery.

Far advanced as it was in the evening, the doctor had not yet dined; his professional duties, together with some other causes already explained, having detained him beyond his usual hour. Nevertheless, for reasons best known to himself, but which, it may be supposed, the events of the afternoon had operated in producing, the doctor had no sooner dismounted, and resigned his steed to the care of a groom, who appeared in waiting the instant that the clatter of his hoofs sounded on the stones of the yard, than, instead of retiring to that removed portion of the building, in which, for the purpose of being beyond the reach of the cries of those who were kept in confinement, his own private apartments were situated, he demanded of one of the keepers the key of a particular cell. Having obtained it,—

"Shall I attend you, sir?" asked the man.

"No Robson. James is harmless. I will see him into his cell myself to-night."

"He is in the patient's yard, sir," replied the keeper.

"Very well—very well. Wait outside; and, if I want assistance, I will call you."

The man retired, while Dr. Rowel proceeded down a long and ill-lighted passage, or corridor, in which were several angular turns and windings; and when nearly lost in the gloom of the place, he might have been heard to draw back a heavy bolt, and raise a spring-latch like an iron bar, which made fast the door that opened upon the yard, or piece of ground to which the keeper had alluded.

It was just at that brief, but peculiar time, at the turn of day and night, which every observer of Nature must occasionally have remarked, when the light of the western atmosphere, and that of the rayless moon high up the southern heaven, mingle together in subdued harmony, and produce a kind of illumination, issuing from no giving spot, but pervading equally the whole atmosphere,—like that which we might imagine of a Genii's palace,—without any particular source, neither wholly of heaven or of earth, but partaking partially of each.

The passage-door was thrown back, and the doctor stood upon its threshold. A yard some forty feet square surrounded by a wall about six yards high, and floored with rolled gravel, like the path of a garden, was before him. Near the centre stood a dismal-looking yew-tree, its trunk rugged, and indented with deep natural furrows, as though four or five shoots had sprung up together, and at last become matted into one; its black lines of foliage, harmonizing in form with the long horizontal clouds of the north-west quarter, which now marked the close approach of night. Nothing else was to be seen. As the eye, however, became somewhat more accustomed to the peculiar dusky light which pervaded this place, the figure of a man standing against the tree-trunk, became visible: with his arms tightly crossed upon his breast, and and bound behind him, as though they had almost grown into his sides; and his hair hanging long upon his shoulders, somewhat like that of a cavalier, or a royalist, of the middle of the seventeenth century.

The doctor raised his voice, and called, in a lusty tone,

"Woodruff!"

The patient returned no answer, nor did he move.

"James Woodruff!" again shouted the doctor.

A slight turn of the head, which as quickly resumed its previous attitude, was the only response made to the summons.

Finding that he could not call that strange individual to him, Doctor Rowel stepped across the yard, and advanced up to him.

"James," said he mildly, "it is time you were in your cell."

The man looked sternly in his face, and replied,

"I have been there some thousands of times too often already."

"Never heed that," answered Rowel. "You *must* go to rest, you know."

"*Must* go—ay? Ah! and so I must. I am helpless. But, had I one hand free—only one hand—nay, with one finger and thumb, I would first put you to rest where you should never wake again! When am I to go free?"

"Will you go to your room?" said the doctor, without regarding his question.

"I ask again," cried the alleged madman, "as I have asked every day past counting, when am I to be loosed from this accursed place? How long is this to last?"

"Only until you are better," remarked, with deep dissimulation, this worthy member of the faculty.

"Better!" exclaimed Woodruff, with rising passion, as he tugged to loosen his arms from the jacket which bound him, though as ineffectually as a child might have tugged at the roots of an oak sapling. "I could curse you again and doubly for that word, but that I *have* cursed till language is weak as water, and words have no meaning. I am sick of railing. Better! Till I am *better*! Thief!—liar!—villain!—for you are all these, and a thousand more,—I am WELL. You know it. Sound in mind and body,—only that these girths have crippled me before my time. How am I mad? I can think, reason, talk, argue,—hold memory of past life. I remember, villain! when you and your assassins seized me; stole my child from me; swore that I was mad; and brought me here, now seventeen years ago; and all that you might rob me of my property!—I remember that. Is that madness? I remember, before that, I married your sister. Was it not so? I remember that she died, and left me a little pattern of herself, that called you uncle. Was not that so? Where is that child? What has become of her? Or are you a murderer besides? All this I remember: and I know now that I have power of will, and aptness to do all that man's mind is called to do. How, then, am I mad? Oh! for one hand free! One hand and arm. Only one! Give me that half chance to struggle with you. Let us end it so, if I am never to go free again. Take two to one; and if you kill me, you shall stand free of the scaffold; for I will swear with my last breath that you did it in self-defence. Do that. Let me have one grapple—a single gripe—and, if you can master me, why God forgive you!"

The doctor smiled, as in contempt of the impotent ravings and wild propositions of his brother-in-law; for such, it is almost needless to state, James Woodruff was. But the alleged maniac continued his discourse.

"Then, as you are such a rank, arrant coward, give me my whole liberty; let me go beyond this house, and I will never touch you. I will not ruffle a hair of your accursed head. Do that and I will leave you to God for the reward of all you have done to me and mine? Set me free! Untie my limbs, and let me out this night! It is dark. Nobody can tell where I came from. Let me go, and I will never mention your name in complaint, nor lift a hand against you. Think, man,—do but think! To spend seventeen years of nights in that dungeon, and seventeen years of days on this speck of ground! To you who have been at liberty to walk, and breathe freely, and see God's creation, it may be idle; but I have seen nothing of seventeen springs but their light skies; nor of summers, but their heat and their strong shadows; nor of autumn, but the random leaves which the wind whirled over into this yard; nor of winter, but its snow and clouds. I want to be upon the green earth,—the grass,—amongst the fields. I want to see my wife's grave again!—some other human face than yours!—and—and—Man,—if you be man,—I want to find my daughter!"

He flung himself on the ground, and groaned as in utter despair.

The doctor was accustomed to witness these fits of frenzy, and therefore paid no farther attention now than consisted in an effort to raise the man again upon his feet, and a renewed solicitation to him to retire into the room.

"No," said he; "I have something to speak of yet. I have come to

another determination. In my mind, villain! there has been seventeen years of rebellion against your wrong; and I have sworn, and have kept my oath till now, that you should never compel me to give up my rights, in virtue of my wife, to you. But time has outworn the iron of my soul: and seventeen years of this endurance cannot be set against all the wealth of the world. What is it to me? To dig the earth, and live on roots; but to be free with it; to go and come as I list; to be at liberty, body and limb! This would be paradise compared with the best palace that ever Mammon built in hell. Now, take these straps from off me, and set me free. Time is favourable. Take me into your house peaceably and quietly, and I will make over to you all I have, as a free gift. What you have stolen; you shall keep. Land, houses, gold, everything; I will not retain of them a grain of sand, a stone, or a sparkle of metal. But let me out! Let me see this prison behind me!"

"It would be the act of a lunatic, and of no effect," replied the doctor.

"How lunatic? To give that which is of no use to me for that which is dearer than life? Besides, I am sane—sound of mind."

"No," interrupted the doctor, "you are wrong on one question. Your disease consists in this very thing. You fancy I keep you confined in order to hold your property myself."

"Fancy you do!" savagely exclaimed Woodruff, stamping the ground with rage; "this contradiction is enough to drive me mad. I know it! You know it. There is no fancy in the case. It is an excuse, a vile pretence, a lie of seventeen years' standing. It was a lie at first. Will you set me free?"

"It cannot be," said the doctor; "go to your room."

"It shall be!" replied Woodruff; "I will not go."

"Then I must call assistance," observed Rowel, as he attempted to approach the door at which he had entered.

"You shall not!" replied the patient, placing himself in front of the doctor, as though resolutely bent on preventing his approach to the door, although he had not the least use of his arms, which might have enabled him to effect his purpose.

"Stand aside, fool!" Rowel exclaimed, as he threw out his right arm in order to strike off the intruder. But Woodruff anticipated him; and, by a sudden and dexterous thrust of his foot in a horizontal line, he knocked the doctor's legs from under him, and sent him sprawling on the ground. Woodruff fell upon him instantly, in order to keep him down, and to stifle the loud cries of "Robson! Robson!" which were now issuing in rapid succession from the doctor's larynx. At the same time a tremendous struggle, rendered still more desperate by the doctor's fears, took place on the ground; during which the unhappy Woodruff strove so violently to disengage his hands from the ligatures of the waistcoat which bound him, that the blood gushed somewhat copiously from his mouth and nostrils. His efforts were not altogether unavailing. He partly disengaged one hand; and, with a degree of activity and energy only to be accounted for from the almost superhuman spirit which burned within him, and for which his antagonist, with all his advantages, was by no means an equal match, he succeeded in planting his forefinger and thumb, like the bite of a crocodile, upon the doctor's throat.

"Swear to let me free, or I'll kill you!" he exclaimed.

"Yes,—y—e—s,—I sw—ear!" gurgled through the windpipe of the vanquished physician, as he kicked and plunged like a horse in a bog to

shake off his foe. The light of a lamp flashed upon them, and Robson rushed into the yard.

"Let me out!" again demanded Woodruff.

"I will, I will!" replied the doctor.

Before Robson could interfere, the grasp upon his neck was loosed, and Woodruff stood quietly upon his feet. The doctor soon followed.

"Seize him, Robson!" said he; and, in an instant, before Woodruff was aware, the strong man had him grasped as in a vice.

"You swore to set me free!" cried the patient.

"Yes," replied the doctor, with a triumphant sneer, as he followed the keeper until he had pitched Woodruff into his room, and secured the entrance. "Yes," he repeated, staring maliciously at his prisoner through the little barred opening in the door,—*"yes, you shall be let out—of this cell into that yard again, when you have grown a little tamer!"*

CHAPTER XVI.

Dr. Rowel argues very learnedly, in order to prove that not only his wife and himself, but the reader also, and all the world besides, may, for aught they know to the contrary, be stark mad.

As Dr. Rowel stepped briskly from the scene of his disaster on the way to his dining-room, he slackened his neckcloth considerably, and with his most critical finger felt very carefully on each side of his gullet, in order to ascertain whether those parts had sustained any material injury: and though he soon convinced himself that no organic disarrangement had resulted, he yet reflected, in the true spirit of an observant practitioner, that a fierce gripe by the throat is but an indifferent stomachic. Whatever other injury was or was not done, his appetite, at least, felt considerably reduced. Disasters, like this, however, being common to every individual who has the care of insane persons, he determined to pass it by unnoticed, and to shake the very recollection of it from off his own mind as soon as possible.

Shortly afterwards the doctor sat down to a well-furnished table, in the place usually appropriated to that second-rate character, the *vice*, and directly opposite his wife, who, in the absence of other company than themselves, invariably took the chair. As he helped himself to the breast of a young turkey, which a week previously had stalked and gobbled with pride about his own yard, he remarked,—for his mind reverted to the trick he had put upon Fanny with great complacency,—that never, during the whole course of his experience, had he so cleverly handled a difficult affair as he had that day. The lady to whom he addressed himself might have considered, in the way of the profession, that he alluded to some case of amputation at the hip-joint, or some other similar operation equally delicate, as she replied, by begging him not to inform her of it that night, as she was already almost overcome with the nervous excitement consequent on the events of the afternoon.

"Indeed?" the doctor exclaimed, raising his eyes. "What has occurred? No patient dead, I hope?"

"Nothing of the kind," returned the lady; "only that James Woodruff has been talking again in such an extraordinary manner, that I feel quite faint even now with it. Do reach me that bottle, dear. Really Rowel, I tell you again, that if he cannot be set at liberty very soon,

shall be compelled to keep out of the way altogether. I will confine myself to this end of the house, and never go within reach of him any more. What a horrible creature he is!"

"He has not injured you, has he?" the doctor again inquired, as he involuntarily run his fore-finger round the inner front of his neckerchief.

"Of course not—how could he? But then that long hair gives him such a frightful look, and at the same time, whenever he can catch a glimpse of me, he always begs and prays me to prevail on you to set him free. I am sure I wonder you keep him, even for my sake; and, besides that, the man seems sensible enough, and always has been, if I am to judge by his conversation."

"Ah!—what—Again?" exclaimed her husband, interrupting her. "How many more times shall I have to repeat to you, that a madman when under restraint, cannot, in some particular cases, be in the most remote degree depended upon, though his observations be apparently as intelligent and sane as yours or mine?"

"I remember you have said so," remarked Mrs. Rowel; "but it seems very singular."

"It may appear very singular in your opinion, my dear, because you are not expected to possess the same erudition and extensive knowledge that a professional man does in these things; though with deference, my dear, common experience and observation might by this time have convinced you that my theory is perfectly correct. With these unhappy people you should believe neither your eyes nor your ears; for if you do, it is a hundred to one but that some of them, at one time or another, will persuade you that they are perfectly sane and well, when, were they to be freed from restraint, they would tear you in pieces the very next instant."

Mrs. Rowel looked somewhat disconcerted, and at a loss to meet her husband in a region so scientific that neither seeing nor hearing were of any use; though secretly she could not but wonder, if neither eyes nor ears were to be trusted, by what superior faculty, what divining-rod of intellect a patient's madness was to be ascertained. Her doubts were not wholly overturned by the ploughshare of the doctor's logic, and therefore she very naturally, though with considerable show of diffidence, stuck pertinaciously to her old opinion.

Her husband felt vexed—and especially as he wished to impose upon her understanding—that with all his powers of speech, and his assumption of profound knowledge, he could not now, any more than hitherto, succeed in converting her to the faith which he himself pretended so devoutly to hold, that lunatics sometimes could not be known by their conversation, and that the individual, James Woodruff, in particular, who was the subject of their conversation, was actually as mad as a March hare, notwithstanding the actions and appearances, undeviating and regular, which in his case so obstinately forced upon Mrs. Rowel the private conviction that he was quite as sound in intellect as any other subject within the King's dominions. Nevertheless, the doctor stifled the feelings of petulant resentment which were rising in his bosom, and satisfied himself simply by assuring his good, though somewhat perverse lady, that it was no very unusual thing for a certain description of lunatics to maintain their own sanity by arguments which, in any other case, would be considered very excellent; though, with experienced professional men, that very fact went farther in support of their derangement than almost any other that could be brought to bear.

"Whenever," continued the doctor, with some degree of warmth, "whenever I meet with a patient—never mind whether he is under medical treatment or not—a patient who endeavours by argument and proof to show me that he is *compos mentis*—who seeks for evidence, as it were, in his own mind to substantiate the sanity of that very mind—that is, a man who appeals for proof to the very thing to be itself proved—who tests the mind by the mind—when I meet with a patient of that description, it seems to imply a kind of doubt and distrust of his own intellect, and I set him down, in spite of what anybody can say to the contrary, as *non compos mentis*, and a proper subject on whom to issue a writ of *ideota inquirendo vel examinando*."

"I cannot argue with you like that, Frank," observed the doctor's wife; "but do you mean to say that a man cannot himself tell whether he is mad—and that nobody else, by what they see and hear, can tell either?"

"I do!" exclaimed Rowel. "I contend that numberless instances exist of latent mental derangement, which are totally unknown both to the insane themselves, and to those persons who are about them."

"Then how do you know it?" asked the lady.

"From the very nature of things, my dear," Dr. Rowel replied. "Time was when verdicts of *felo de se* were returned in cases of self-destruction; but now every twopenny shopkeeper is wise enough to know, that the very act of self murder itself is evidence of mental derangement."

"But what has this to do with the question?" demanded Mrs. Rowel.

"It has this to do with it," continued her husband, "that neither you nor I, nor anybody else, however wise we may think ourselves, can know for a certainty, positively and conclusively, whether we are mad or not."

"Then do you mean to say that I am mad?"

"I mean to say this, my dear, that for aught you know to the contrary, you may be."

"Come, that is foolish, Frank. But you do not think so, do you?"

"Think!—I think nothing about it," replied Rowel: "only, as you seem to believe that such a lunatic as James Woodruff is very much in his senses, it might be supposed you had a bit of a slate loose yourself."

"Oh, I am sure I have not!" tartly resumed the lady. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself for saying such a thing."

"No, no!—I do not say any such thing, by any means. The case of Woodruff is certainly, in one sense, the most singular I ever knew, and to me, in my situation, a peculiarly painful one; but what then?—what can I do?"

"Why, you know, my dear," replied Mrs. Rowel, in a deprecatory tone of voice, "that you *do* manage his property, after all. The man is right enough, as far as that goes."

"Right enough, truly—I *do*. But how do I? Is not the trouble as great as the profit? I keep it all together where it was for him,—prevent him from squandering it in his mad fits, as he was about to do at the time I caused him to be placed in confinement,—keep him out of harm's way,—clothe him,—feed him,—medicine,—attendance,—everything,—and not a single item put down against his estate for all this. What was I to do, do you suppose? Was it likely I should stand quietly by, and see all that he had himself, and all that my sister Frances left him, go to rack and ruin, waste and destruction, as if it were of no more value than an old song?"

"But what was it that he was doing?" asked Mrs. Rowel; "for I am sure I could never find out."

"He was doing nothing actually," said the doctor. "But what should you have thought of me, if I had kept my hands in my pockets until the mischief was past, before I attempted to interfere? It was what I foresaw he intended to do that caused me to step between. Was not he going to pull that good new house to pieces, for the sake of patching up the old one with its materials? The man must have been stark raving mad to have thought of such a thing, and everybody would have said so."

"I should not have said so," observed the lady; "though there is nothing wonderful about that, as you have told me that I may be mad too. But it was always my opinion that the old family house was worth ten of the other, if it had but the same fire-grates, and chimney-pieces put in it."

"The fact iss," replied he, "you were all mad together about that tumble-down crazy concern, merely because it *was* the old house; and I am very glad I put a stop to it when I did, and in the manner I did, though I think he knows better now, mad as he is at present. To tell you the truth, my dear," and the doctor lowered his voice to a more serious and impressive tone, "I do not think he cares much or perhaps not anything at all about it. His liberty seems to be the principal thing with him. Do you know, he offered this evening to make the whole property over to me as a free gift, if I would let him out."

"Did he, indeed!" exclaimed the lady, as tears of pity swam in her eyes. "Poor fellow!—poor fellow!"

"Why, poor fellow? I didn't prompt him what to say. Besides, I would not take it. How dare I let him out? His gift would be good for nothing to me, being void at law. I cannot let him out. And even if I had ever dreamed of trying such a hazardous experiment, it would, under present circumstances, be impossible."

"But why impossible, Frank?" asked Mrs. Rowel.

Frank Rowel began to imagine, from the turn which his wife appeared inclined to take in this business, that the relation of his interview with Fanny, which had discovered to him so unexpectedly the person of James Woodruff's daughter, and his own niece, would not materially profit him in the eyes of that lady; and therefore, although he had at first intended to make it known to her, he for the present forbore, and contented himself by assuring her how exceedingly lucky it was that, for her own sake, she had some one about her whose knowledge was not so soon set aside, and whose feelings of compassion were not so easily excited as her own; or otherwise it would inevitably come about that the whole establishment of lunatics would some day or other, out of pure kindness, be let loose to run rampant over and affright the whole country-side.

"Then James is to remain there?" questioned the lady.

"I see no chance for him," was the reply; "everything is against him. he *must* be confined for life."

Mrs. Rowel sighed, looked at her husband, then at the decanter of sherry which stood on the table, then smiled significantly, and then added in a half-jesting tone, though with a very serious and fixed intention,

"I'll take a glass of wine with you, my dear."

And so she did, and several others after it.

In fact, though I abhor anything that might be supposed to touch on scandal, Mrs. Rowel liked sherry.

CHAPTER XVII.

James Woodruff soliloquizes in his cell.—An unlooked-for offer of liberty is made him, and on what conditions.

WHILE yet the last ominous and deceitful reply which Dr. Rowel had made to James Woodruff, rung in his ear, as a sound incredible and impossible to have been heard, he threw himself on the loose straw which covered an iron bedstead that stood in a corner of his cell, and writhed in bodily and in mental agony, both from what he had just endured, and from the stinging reflections that, having once had his oppressor in his power, he should have so spared him, so confided in his promises, and been so treacherously deceived!

The consciousness of his own magnanimity, and implicit faith in his brother-in-law's solemn word and oath, aggravated the bitterness of these reflections, until the despair within him became worse to endure than all the horrors without. All hope of freedom had now finally departed. He had made the last and greatest sacrifices in his power to obtain it, and it had only been cast back in his face as worthless, because it would be considered as the act of a madman. He had implored, promised, threatened,—nay, he had put his very life in peril,—and all for what? for nothing. What more remained to do? To wait the double result of chance for an unforeseen and apparently impossible deliverance,—to waste away the last pulsations of a worse than worthless life in the protracted misery of that dungeon,—or to take heart in this extremity to do a deed that should at once shut the gates of hope and of fear in this world upon him for ever? Would it not be better to beat out his brains against the wall, and throw himself, uncalled, before his God, his wretchedness standing in extenuation of his crime, than thus to do and to suffer by hours, days, nights and years, with no change that marked to-day from yesterday, or this year from the year that went before, nor any chance of change to distinguish the years to come from those that had already passed? In the same monotonous round of darkness passed in that cell, of pacing some few steps to his day-yard, of turnings and returnings within that limited space, and then of pacing back to pass hours of darkness in his cell again,—time seemed to stand still, or only to return at daylight, and work over again the same well known revolution that it wrought when daylight last appeared.

Looking back beyond these dreary seventeen years, what had his mind to rest upon?—Sorrow for his wife's premature death; solicitude, painful and unfathomably deep, for the babe she had left to his sole care; his struggle onwards through a now blighted world, solely on account of the little helpless thing that had no friend but him; and then the sudden, the unexpected, and horrible injustice of an avaricious brother-in-law, which had overwhelmed him as with an avalanche, deprived him of all he possessed, shut up himself in a place of horrors, and, worst of all, put a way that child, motherless and fatherless, to endure perhaps all that the lowest poverty endures, or to sink under it when she could endure no longer.

Before him, even under the best circumstances, what had he to look for, even if he were free? The world had nothing in it for him but that wife's burying-place, a house where her dear living picture should be, and was

not, and a hearth of desolation for himself. Why had he pleaded so earnestly for liberty?—the liberty that had nothing to offer him even when obtained? Those two gone, why should he alone wish to remain? A bed of earth was, after all, the best place for him.

And yet—for the rebound of the spirits is often in proportion to their fall—it was possible, were he free, that he might find his daughter again. The doctor might be compelled to tell him how she had been disposed of in the first instance, and he might be able to trace her out. Occurrences less probable had come to pass before, and why not in this case also? He might find her, and in her—though grown a woman, whom he should not perhaps know again—one who would yet be like her mother Francis over again, a pride and joy to his house, and a consolation in the last years of his existence. But the vision faded when again and again the withering and insurmountable question reurred to him,—how could he get free? In the most direct course, the events of that evening had cut off all hope; in any other there lay none. It was true that visitors sometimes came to inspect the house, and mark the treatment of the patients. To tell them his tale, and ask their aid, was useless. Such had been before, and he had told them; but nobody believed him; they only looked on with wonder or fear, and went away pitying the painful nature of his delusions. Could he escape? He had, years ago, planned every conceivable mode of escape,—he had tried them, and had failed. He must remain there—it was his doom: he must still hear as he had heard until he cared little for it, the solemn deadness of the night disturbed with shrieks that no sane mortal could have uttered; the untimely dancings of witless men, without joy in them; the bursts of horrid laughter from woman's lips without mirth; the singings of merry woods, with a direful vivacity that filled the veins with a creeping terror more fearful than that of curses; and sometimes plaintive notes from the love-lost, whose eyes were sleepless, which might have made the heart burst with pity! He must still live amidst all this, and still shrink (as he did sometimes) into the closest corner of his pallet, and bless himself in the iron security of his cell, (which by daylight he abhorred,) from very dread of those imaginary horrors which the wild people about the building conjured up in the depths of nature's sleeping-time.

As these thoughts thronged thickly on James Woodruff's mind, he extended himself on his back along the couch of straw, and put up his hands, which were commonly loosed when in his cell, in an attitude of prayer upon his breast. But the contemplated words were momentarily arrested by the light tread of feet along the passage outside. A ray of moonlight from the high-up little window streamed almost perpendicularly down, and fell partly on his bed and partly on the floor, making an oblong figure of white thereon, distinct and sharpened, as though light and darkness had been severed as with a knife. A strong reflection from this spot was thrown upon the door, by the aid of which he beheld through the grating that looked into the dark passage a white hand clutching the little bars, and higher up the dim shadow of a face, that looked like that of a spirit. Woodruff rose up, and sat upon the cold edge of his iron bed.

"James!" whispered a voice through the grating, which he instantly recognised as that of the doctor's wife, "are you awake?"

"Would that I were not!" he replied; "for the oblivion of sleep is the only welcome thing to me here."

"My husband has written a paper for you—will you sign it?"

"To set me free?" demanded Woodruff, as he started eagerly up at the very thought, and seemed to show by his signs how gladly he caught at the remotest possibility of deliverance, and how fearful he felt least it should escape him.

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed the lady, hurriedly; "that is the object."

And on receiving, on the part of Woodruff, a passionate assurance of compliance with the proposal, she hastened back as though for the purpose of fetching the paper alluded to.

It is needful here to explain, that after we had parted with the doctor and his wife at the dinner-table, as related in the preceding chapter, the conversation relating to James Woodruff, a portion of which has been chronicled for the reader's edification, was renewed; and as the doctor discussed his wine and shrivelled walnuts, and increased proportionably both in boldness of thought and fertility of invention, he considered over and over again the proposal that his brother-in-law had made to him for the conditional surrender of all his property. The idea took hold of him very strongly, and struck the deeper root in his bosom the longer he considered it. Charnwood was a snug little estate, to be sure. It had been in the family some generations, and great would be his regret that it should pass away by marriage, as it must, in the event of Woodruff's retaining possession. It was true he had told Fanny's father that his proffered gift of it would, under present circumstances, be considered as the act of a madman, and therefore invalid and illegal. But could no mode be adopted to obviate this difficulty? The doctor thought, and thought again; and at last came to the conclusion that he would disregard the illegality of the transaction altogether, provided he could induce James to make a solemn written declaration, binding himself in a moral sense, if in no other, that, on obtaining his liberty, he would not take any step whatever to recover possession of the estate. A clever move, thought Rowel;—the man is conscientious fool enough to keep his word; and, as possession is nine parts of the law, I shall be safe.

Full of this scheme, he sounded the opinion of his wife on the subject; and, although she had at first expressed pity for the condition of her brother-in-law, yet, when it came to the serious question which involved the possession of such a pleasant little estate as Charnwood, Mrs. Rowel began to reflect that, after all, people must look a little to their own interests in this world, or else they may allow everybody to step over their heads. As to being so over particular about how you get it, so that you do but get it, people are always ready to look up to you; and, if the truth were known, she dare say that some others she could mention who did possess property had obtained it in not a better manner, if so good. She could not, therefore, see any *very* great harm—and especially as Woodruff had offered it himself—in taking the property on those conditions; although she should certainly have liked it all the better, had there been any choice, if the transaction could have been managed with a greater show of equity.

The doctor felt quite pleased with the business-like turn of mind which his lady had developed; and, as nothing less than drawing up a paper to the effect explained would satisfy him, he proceeded at once to its accomplishment.

When Mrs. Rowel returned to the room in which Woodruff was confined, with the paper in one hand which her husband had written, and a small lamp in the other, followed closely by the doctor with ink and

pen, the alleged lunatic again rose from his bed, and eagerly demanded the instrument which was to seal his redemption. While the little lamp was held up to the grating in the door, Woodruff took the paper and read as follows :—

“ Memorandum made this — day of —, 18—.

“ Whereas I, James Woodruff, widower, formerly of Charnwood, in the county of —, being at the time in sound and composed mind, do hereby promise to make over to Frank Rowel, M. D., of Nabbfield, in the said county, brother of my late wife Frances, all and singular the land, houses, barns, and all other property whatever, comprised in and on the estate known as the Charnwood farm, on the conditions now specified viz.—that he, the said Frank Rowel, shall hold me free to come to, and go from, his establishment for the insane at Nabbfield in what manner and whenever I please, and shall also hold me wholly exempt from molestat on from the date of this memorandum henceforward. Now this is to certify that I, the said James Woodruff, hereby solemnly and faithfully pledge myself, without equivocation or mental reservation of any kind, that, on the conditions named on the part of the aforesaid Frank Rowel being fulfilled, I will never in any manner, by word or by deed, either by myself or through the instrumentality of others, take any steps whatever to recover possession of the said property, or of any portion of it, either in my own name or in that of my daughter, Frances Woodruff, spinster.”

The document dropped from his hands.

“ Then she is living !” exclaimed the father : “ my daughter is alive !”

Doctor Rowel changed countenance, as though suddenly made aware that he had committed a slight mistake ; but he put the best face he could upon it, by reluctantly assuring his prisoner that she was alive and well.

“ Thank Heaven for that !” cried Woodruff : “ then take this bond away—I will not sign it ! I would give away my own, were it a thousand times greater, for one more day of life at liberty, but I cannot rob her of her mother’s dower. Let me rather rot here, and trust that a better fate than has befallen me may restore her to that which I can never enjoy. Away with it !—leave me !—And yet—”

Woodruff covered his eyes with his hand, and stood trembling in doubt and irresolution.

“ And yet—and yet—tell me where my daughter is, and I *will* sign it. Liberate me *now*—upon this spot, and at this time, and I will sign it.”

The doctor demurred.

“ Then to-morrow !—as soon as possible—before another night ?”

Still the doctor would not promise exactly when he would liberate him. At length certain conditional terms were agreed to, and James Woodruff signed away all his own property, and that which should have been Fanny’s inheritance, together.

Dr. Rowel knew that the memorandum he held, morally binding upon Woodruff to leave him in undisputed possession of Charnwood, was useless, except between himself and that unfortunate man. He put it safely away in his escutoire for that night, and on the morrow looked it carefully over again, and still felt distrustful and in doubt. As Woodruff had given the promise under compulsion, would he not consider it no crime to disregard it the instant he felt himself secure beyond the walls ? At all events, he would keep on the safe side, and detain him for the present, or *until he could obtain more full satisfaction.*

With this reflection, he gave orders that Woodruff was that day only to be removed into his accustomed yard; and mounting his horse rode off in the direction of the farm at Whinmoor, as he felt desirous of seeing Fanny again.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A colloquy between Mrs. Clink and Miss Sowersoft, in which the latter proves herself a most able tactician, and gives a striking illustration of the difference between talking and doing.

BEFORE Dr. Rowel had ridden two miles on his journey, another visitor had arrived at Miss Sowersoft's in the person of Mrs. Clink. Astonished at the account she had received through Abel of the illness of her son, and vexed at the stay which Fanny made with the boy, she resolved to walk over and inquire into the affair in person.

Taking advantage of the first interview with her, the amiable Miss Maria had done to the utmost of her power to qualify the evil impressions which she feared some mischievous tale-tellers might have raised in her mind with respect to the treatment that Colin had received. Without having actually witnessed it, she said it was impossible that any mother could credit the trouble taken with him, in order to render him fit for his situation, and to instruct him in those experiences of society which would enable him to go out into the world without being misled by that great fallacy, so common amongst the youth of both sexes, that they are born for nothing but enjoyment, and that everybody they meet with are their friends. To root out this fatal error at the very commencement had been her principal endeavour; and though she, of course, expected nothing less than that the boy himself would look upon her somewhat harshly—for it was natural to juvenile minds to be easily offended,—yet she had persevered in her course conscientiously, and with the full assurance that whatever the lad might think or say now, he would *thank* her in after years; and also, that either his own mother, or any other person of ripe experience, would see good reason to thank her also, for adopting a method of discipline so eminently calculated to impress upon his mind that truest of all truths, that the world was a hard place, and life a difficult journey to struggle through.

"The sooner young people are made acquainted with that fact," continued Miss Sowersoft, "the better it is for themselves."

"You are right there, Miss Sowersoft," replied Mrs. Clink; "for I am sure if we were but taught at first what the world *really is*, we should never go into it, as many of us do, only to be imposed upon, deceived, and ruined, through the false confidence in which we have been bred of everybody's good meaning, and uprightness, and integrity. It is precisely the line of conduct I have myself pursued in bringing Colin up from the cradle. I have impressed upon him above all things to tell the truth whenever it was necessary to speak, and to pay no regard whatever to consequences, be they good or evil."

"Yes, Mrs. Clink," replied Miss Sowersoft, slightly reddening, and peeping at the ends of her finger-nails, "yes, that is very good to a certain extent; but then I think it might be carried too far. Children should be taught to discriminate a little between truth and downright impudence, as well as to keep their mouths shut about anything they may happen to

overhear, whenever their masters or mistresses are talking in the confidentiality of privacy."

Mrs. Clink confessed herself ignorant of what Miss Sowersoft alluded to, but observed, that if she intended the remark to apply to Colin, she was confident he would never be guilty of so mean a thing as to listen to the private conversation of any two persons in the world.

"It is natural you should have a good opinion of him," replied Miss Maria; "but should you believe your eyes if you had caught him at it?—oracular demonstration, as my brother Ted very properly calls it?"

"I should believe my eyes, certainly," said Mrs. Clink.

"Then we did catch him at it, and Mr. Palethorpe was much excited, of course—for he is very passionate indeed when he is once got up—and he took him in his rage and dipped him in the horse-trough. Not that I justify his passion, or say that I admire his revenge—nothing of the sort, but I must say, that if there is one thing more mean and contemptible than another, or that deserves to be more severely punished in children, it is that of listening behind hedges and doors, to know the very thing that people wish to keep particularly secret."

Colin's mother was about to reply, had not the sudden entrance of Dr. Rowel prevented her, and left Miss Sowersoft's philippic against listeners and listening in all its force and weight upon her mind.

Anxious to see the boy, Mrs. Clink followed the doctor up stairs, and found Fanny sitting by his bed side, with a cup of lukewarm tea in her hand, waiting until he should wake. Having examined his patient, the doctor addressed Fanny to the effect that he wished to have a few minutes' conversation with her down stairs. Miss Sowersoft, on being made aware of the doctor's wish, ushered him and Fanny into an inner parlour, assuring them that they would be perfectly retired there, as no one could approach the door without her own knowledge.

"There is something vastly curious in this," said Miss Maria to herself, as she carefully closed the door. "What can the doctor want with such an impudent nix?"

And so she remained, pursuing her dark cogitations through all the labyrinths of scandal, until Mrs. Clink had bidden our hero good-bye, and crept down stairs. On turning the corner of the wall, the first object she beheld was Miss Sowersoft, with her ear close to the key-hole of the inner parlour door—apparently so deeply intent on what was going forward within, as to have almost closed her senses to any thing without, for she did not perceive Mrs. Clink's approach until she stood within a yard or two of her.

"Ay, bless me!—are you here?" she exclaimed, as she drew herself up. "Why, you, see, ma'am, there is no rule without an exception; and, notwithstanding what I was saying when Dr. Rowel came in, yet Mrs. Clink, it was impossible for me to be aware how soon it might be needful for me to break my own rule. You know that servant of yours is a very likely person, Mrs. Clink, for any gentleman to joke with; and though I do not mean to insinuate any thing—I should be very sorry to do so, indeed; but still, doctor though he is—in fact, to tell you the truth"—and Miss Sowersoft drew her auditor to the farther side of the room, and spoke in a whisper—it is highly fortunate I had the presence of mind to listen at the door; for I heard the doctor very emphatically impress on your servant the necessity of not letting even *you* yourself know any thing about it, under any circumstances; and at the same time he promised her something—presents, for aught we know—and said he would do some-

thing for her. Now, Mrs. Clink what could he mean by that?—I have my suspicions; and if I were in your *place*, I should *insist, positively insist*, on knowing all about it, or she should not live another day in my house."

Mrs. Clink stood amazed and confounded. She would have pledged her word that, if needful, Fanny would have resisted any offered insult to the death; but she knew not what to think after what she had just heard.

"I will insist on knowing it!" she exclaimed. "The girl is young and simple, and may be easily imposed upon by —"

"Hush! hush!" interposed Miss Sowersoft, "they are coming out!"

As they came out, Miss Sowersoft looked thunder at Fanny, and bade the doctor good morning with a peculiar stiltiness of expression, which implied in her own opinion, a great deal more than any boby else could possibly have made of it.

"Have her down stairs directly!" continued the lady of the establishment, (for Fanny had gone up stairs, as soon as Dr. Rowel had passed out of hearing. "A nasty huzzy!—If she did not answer me every thing straight forwards, I should know what to think of it, and what to do as well, that I should! But you can do as you like, Mrs. Clink.")

Colin's mother called Fanny down stairs again, and took her followed by Miss Maria, into the same room in which she had so recently held her colloquy with her uncle the doctor.

CHAPTER XIX.

Displays Miss Sowersoft's character in a degree of perfection unparalleled on any previous exhibition.—Fanny's obstinacy incites Mrs. Clink to turn her adrift upon the world.

HAVING entered the room, Miss Sowersoft first peeped out to see that no listeners were in the neighbourhood, and then cautiously closed the door—all the blood in her veins mustered up in red rebellion against poor Fanny, as she stated at that young woman through two dilated eyes, with something of the expression of a hand-grenade with a newly lit fusee.

"Take a chair, Mrs. Clink," said Miss Maria, in a tone which denoted more than her ordinary attention to etiquette, as she still kept her eyes on Fanny in order to make her feel her own insignificance the more keenly by the contrast: do be seated;" and she drew up another chair for herself, while Fanny was left standing, as best became a servant—and a culprit. "Now, I am quite ready to begin. Have it out of her at once—I would not stand on ceremony with anybody like her!"

"What is it, Fanny," asked Mrs. Clink, "that the doctor has been talking to you about?"

"I cannot answer that," replied Fanny: "I have promised to tell nobody, and I must keep my word."

"There!—that's sufficient!" cried Miss Maria, "that is plenty! You see what it is. She has *promised*, and will not explain it. I knew before, as well as if I had heard, how it would all be. She has compromised herself, just as such a young face-proud huzzy was sure to do. It is a wonder to me, Mrs. Clink, how you have contrived to keep her respectable so long."

"I did not intend to talk to *you*, Miss Sowersoft," replied Fanny; "but I will tell you that I have always been too respectable for what you seem to think."

"Answer me, Fanny," interposed Mrs. Clink. "I am sure you will answer me."

"I cannot, ma'am," said Fanny.

"You positively will not, do you mean to say?"

"Indeed I cannot, because I have promised I would not; but it is nothing of the least harm."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Miss Sowersoft, "not the least harm!—to be sure not!—oh, no! She is very innocent, no doubt."

"If I discharge you from your service unless you do tell me, what then?" asked her mistress.

"I cannot help it if you do," said Fanny, as she burst into tears at the bare mention of quitting that place which had been as a home to her nearly all her life.

"Then I positively insist either that you do tell me all about it, or stay with me no longer than until you can suit yourself elsewhere. I do not wish to part with you,—far from it. You have been with me almost all your life, and I should not like to see the day when you turned your back upon my door for the last time; but I cannot have this silence and secrecy about such an affair as the present. I have known enough, and more than enough, of the ruin and misery that many ensue, to allow it in any young woman under my care. I cannot have it, Fanny, and will not have it; so you must make your choice."

Fanny cried bitterly, and with some difficulty made herself understood amidst so many sobs and sighs, as she protested that she dared not tell more than she had told; that, on her solemn word, it was not about anything that could in the least injure her.

"Well, I must say I give her credit for what she says," remarked Mrs. Clink, in an under tone, to Miss Maria.

"Give her a birch rod!" exclaimed the latter lady. "I wonder how you can allow yourself to be so easily imposed upon! It is all her artfulness, and nothing else. She is as cunning as Satan, and as deep as the day is long, she is! Ask her what made the doctor say he would do something for her,—let her unriddle that, if she can."

Mrs. Clink accordingly continued the examination much in the manner already described, and with about the same success. Fanny resisted all inquiry as sternly as at first, until at length Mrs. Clink gave her a formal warning to seek out for another situation, and to leave her present place as soon as she had found one. Fanny replied, that she would go begging rather than betray the trust reposed in her, as she believed that Providence would never let her starve for having done what was right.

"What a wicked wretch she is!" Miss Sowersoft exclaimed, when she heard poor Fanny's expression of trust in a more just power than that which now condemned her; "I am sure her horrible wickedness turns me white to hear it."

This female tribunal having dissolved itself, much as some other popular tribunals do, simply because nothing further remained to engage its attention, Miss Fanny was dismissed up stairs again, and the other two ladies remained below to discuss in private the question of Colin's removal home, until such time as his recovery might admit of his return to the labours of the farm.

It will be quite sufficient to state, as the result of their deliberations, and in conclusion of this last chapter of our first book, that within eight-and-forty hours afterwards our hero, being somewhat recovered, was laid on a bed placed in a cart, and carried home; that Fanny attended him there during some brief space of time afterwards, until she procured another situation, and left Mrs. Clink's service at once and forever; and that these changes, together with some others of very superior importance, which I shall proceed immediately to relate, brought about such a "new combination of parties" amongst the personage, great and small, who have figured in our pages, as cannot fail, when explained, to throw great light upon the yet dark and abstruse points of this veritable history.

BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

Diamond cut diamond; the two rogues. A gentleman resolves, without consent asked, to make Fanny his wife.

AFTER the time spoken of in the preceding chapter, a month of the fairest season of the year passed away; during which our hero, Colin, continued to improve in health and strength much more rapidly than he would, in all probability, have done had he remained at the delightful residence of Miss Sowersoft, at Whinmoor.

The consciousness of being at home, whatever that home may be, is more to the invalid than a thousand advantages which might perhaps be enjoyed in a strange place. Fanny, meanwhile, continued to fulfil her accustomed duties, without receiving any information from Doctor Rowel, as to the nature of the services which he had promised to render in her favour.

Mrs. Clink's feelings of asperity against Fanny, for her obstinacy in refusing to make known the communications of the doctor, were now, however, so far worn away that she never spoke again of discharging her, and, in fact, would secretly have been pleased had she only expressed the slightest wish to remain. But, so far from this, Fanny resolved to leave her place at the earliest opportunity. While Colin remained at home she left the matter in abeyance; but when he returned to the farm, which he reluctantly did at the expiration of eight or ten weeks, she felt no longer the same inducement to stay as before; and accordingly sought, in compliance with her mistress's previous injunction, for another situation.

This was not long in presenting itself. An old woman, who had long managed the bachelor's household of Mr. Skinwell, the lawyer, happened about this time to die. A gap was left where she had stood; and, as though for the especial purpose of bringing about a discovery, which it was highly needful Fanny should make, she was destined to fill it.

While the villagers of Bramleigh were occupied in discussing the cause of the old housekeeper's death, Mrs. Clink and Fanny were surprised one evening with a visit from Mr. Skinwell. Still more were they amazed when he explained his business, namely, to induce Fanny to leave her present situation, and take that which the death of the old housekeeper had made vacant.

Although Skinwell represented his present visit as in great part the result of accident, he nevertheless, we may imagine, had certain very cogent reasons of his own for desiring to get Miss Fanny Woodruff into his house. In fact, certain matters had come to his knowledge professionally, concerning the said Fanny and her father.

It should be stated, that after Dr. Rowel had obtained the document from James Woodruff, a copy of which has already been given, he still continued in doubt as to the course he should pursue to make himself secure. Wise as his own plans had at first appeared, he so far distrusted them on further consideration, as to consider it needful to consult Mr. Skinwell professionally, on the matter; but, as he knew the affair to be a very delicate one, he at first put it to that gentleman hypothetically. As Mr. Skinwell, however, happened to have his own private reasons for misunderstanding the doctor's hypothesis, he protested he could not comprehend the full merits of the case unless it were put in a more circumstantial manner. After a good deal of beating about the bush, Mr. Skinwell satisfied himself that the doctor referred to a case in which he was himself concerned, and he also contrived to ascertain the names of the parties, the amount of property at stake, and the relationship which subsisted between the unfortunate man now confined at Nabbfield, and Fanny Woodruff.

By a little quiet manœuvring on his own part, Skinwell saw that he could not only protect the alleged lunatic and his daughter from the villainy of Dr. Rowel, but serve himself at the same time.

"My opinion," said he, "is this. The contract of gift being clearly illegal, you had better put it into the fire; and, if the patient is now of sound mind, as you have intimated, you are bound to set him at liberty, and restore to him his estate. If, on the other hand, he is unfit to be at large, he and his daughter must be adequately maintained out of the profits of that estate. Your course is as clear as daylight."

But it was not clear to the doctor that—whatever the law of the case might be,—he could not contrive other means to effect the object he had in view; and so much he gave the lawyer to understand; at the same time insinuating, that if Mr. Skinwell would assist him in achieving that object, his reward should be in proportion to his service. A proposal to which that legal gentleman returned a very grave rebuke.

"Long as you have known my character, Doctor, I am astonished and indignant that you should have made such a proposal to me. I give my legal opinion plainly and frankly: but that man very much mistakes me who imagines I will prostitute my professional character to a base service for the sake of hire. So far from it, sir, I do not hesitate to tell you now, before you leave my office, that, although this communication has been made to me in confidence, and professionally, I do not hold myself bound to keep faith, neither as a lawyer nor a man, in cases of swindling; and, that if your intentions towards these parties are of such a nature, I shall exert myself to the utmost of my ability in depriving you of your control over them, and restoring them to their rights."

Doctor Rowel stood confounded, mute, and pale. Who ever thought that Skinwell had so much virtue in him? The doctor felt he was a fool for having gone so far. How best should he get out of the scrape? How avert the lawyer's threatened co-operation with Woodruff and his daughter Fanny. The doctor had not much time to think before he was

obliged to speak. He recovered his tongue, and stammered out a kind of apologetical explanation; in which he endeavoured to do away with the impression made on Skinwell's mind as to the dishonesty of his intentions; but the fact had previously been too plainly avowed to be thus explained away.

The doctor and his legal adviser parted in mutual dudgeon, though with very opposite feelings; the former in rage at the defeat of his project, while upon the mind of the latter a faint hope dawned that he might win the hand of Fanny, and so secure the chance of inheriting the estate of Charnwood whenever her father might happen to die (as he doubtless would very soon), after it had been wrested by the tact of Mr. Skinwell himself from the hands of Doctor Rowel of Nabbfield.

Could Fanny and Mrs. Clink have been in the least aware of the motives which actuated Skinwell in making them so unusual a call, they would not have felt so much surprise; and the young woman would have given a prompt and decisive denial to his application. But Fanny saw only what seemed to her an offer of advancement, and a release from the thrall in which, to a certain extent, Mrs. Clink continued to hold her. She therefore hesitated not long in accepting the offer which Mr. Skinwell had made her; and finally consented to enter upon her new duties in about a week.

This engagement was fulfilled accordingly, and Fanny remained in the situation until a terrible event deprived her suddenly and forever of her master. Several years, however, elapsed before this occurrence, during which nothing of consequence to our narrative took place.

CHAPTER II.

Which, though perfectly natural, contains matters that not the most ingenious person could foresee.

In the bar of a little tavern at Bramleigh, Doctor Rowel was seated before a round table, on which stood a glass of cold sherry and water, with a thin biscuit on a little plate beside it.

Now, during the former part of his life, the doctor had not by any means been in the general habit of passing his time at such a place, and in such a manner. Latterly, however, fear had made him suspicious; and during the few years which I have said elapsed after his attempt to bribe the lawyer, and while Fanny remained in the house of this latter worthy, he had been haunted with certain undefinable terrors least the law should at some time or other discover anything relating to the subject on which they had so seriously differed, and on which he could not but feel that he lay very much at Mr. Skinwell's mercy. To be prepared for, and to counteract as far as he could, anything of this kind, Dr. Rowel had mingled somewhat more than hitherto had been his wont with the people of the village; although it was not until this identical evening that he had heard anything tending to involve his opponent, the lawyer, in the charge of having made use against him of the results of that professional and confidential communication between them already described. The information which had thus come to the doctor's knowledge was of a nature to decide, in his opinion, the existence of a plot on the part of Skinwell to discover the whole secret to Fanny Woodruff, and

then, with her concurrence, and in her name, to take proceedings for the liberation of her father, and the recovery of his property. Whether that information was true remains to be seen; though certain enough it is, that Mr. Skinwell had employed the intervening time in cultivating Fanny's friendship, and rendering himself as agreeable to her as any middle-aged bachelor can reasonably expect to be to a young maid.

Under these circumstances, the reflections which crowded on the mind of Rowel were bitterness itself, and the more bitter, because he stood indebted to no one save himself for being placed in his present position. In imagination he saw himself reduced to the lowest extremity, at which point he began to form resolutions for his own protection against such a dreaded end. He fancied, perhaps, the lawyer might fall sick before his plans were ripe, and that he himself might have to attend him. Would that he might die suddenly!—that a fever would take him off, or a plague seize him—or—yes—nobody questions a physician's medicine—if—nay, he dare not trust his bewildered brain to think it. He must be mad—to suffer such a thought to cross his mind—and yet it came again and again—it *would* come. He began to feel fearful of himself—to doubt whether he could trust himself to do right rather than wrong, should misfortune place his opponent in his power. While Skinwell lived, the doctor himself held all he had upon the slender tenure of a dozen words, which might be spoken for the gain they would bring,—or be uttered recklessly in a moment of anger,—or might even drop out thoughtlessly, as one of those true things spoken in jest which they who hear never forget.

Doctor Rowel looked up, and beheld the village lawyer before him, taking a seat on the opposite side of the table. Rowel did not acknowledge his entrance nor his presence, until after a few minutes of dead silence, in which his face became as white as ashes with the secret emotions of his mind. He then abruptly, and with hurried speech, put this question to him,

"Mr. Skinwell, I have heard something lately respecting you,—and now I wish to know what it is you intend to do about that business of mine?"

"Having already giving my opinion, doctor," replied Skinwell, "I have nothing more to say to you."

"But I have something to say to you," responded the physician. "I intend to know for what purpose you have had that girl in your house so long, before you and I part again."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Skinwell, sarcastically, though still somewhat flushed to find that his intentions had somehow become suspected; "then you are not the first man, doctor, I can assure you, who has intended a great deal more than he could achieve. Do you imagine, because I am not quite *knave* enough for you, that I am quite fool enough to make myself accountable to you for what I choose to do?"

"I intend to know that," repeated Rowel, doggedly. "Do you mean to blow to the world what has been made known to you in strict confidence as a professional man? Because, if that is your principle, I tell you beforehand, and to your face, that you are a disgrace to your profession, and a d—d dishonourable scoundrel to boot."

"Just hand me three and fourpence," remarked Skinwell, with the most provoking coolness, "for informing you, that by talking in that manner you are laying yourself open to a special action."

"Do you mean to act the villain?" demanded Rowel, with increased passion.

"Three and fourpence, doctor," demanded Skinwell.

"Ay! you're a mean cold-blooded scoundrel," continued the doctor, still more enraged.

Skinwell was somewhat aroused by this abuse, and replied in a more biting temper.

"Why, if you really want to know whether I intend to blow you to the world as you call it, I answer—yes. I am resolved to expose your villainy, and compel you to do justice in spite of yourself."

"Oh, very well," cried the doctor, rising from his seat, and striding towards the door, "that is enough—say no more—that is all I want. Now I know my man. But I'll tell you what," and he turned half round in the doorway, and looked at his antagonist with the fierce malignity of a demon, "if physic can't beat law to the dogs at last, I'll grant you free grace to drain me to my last penny." So saying, he hurried out of the house.

The words which the lawyer had uttered seemed, like an echo a hundred times repeated, to ring in Rowel's ears as a sound that would never die away. He hurried along the village street more by instinct than present knowledge, in the direction of the lawyer's house. On reaching it, he knocked at the door, which was opened by Fanny.

"Young woman," said he, "you remember what I told you when I first saw you at Whinmoor? You have not mentioned a word to any one? Then take care not to do so on any account. You are in danger. If Skinwell asks you anything, do not utter a word, or the design I had in view for you is ruined. If he tells you anything, do not believe him;—no matter what it is, tell him you do not believe it. He is a scoundrel,—an unmitigated villain,—and if you stay longer in this house you will be ruined. Trust none of his promises. He may pretend he wants to marry you, but do not believe him; and if he says he knows something about you and your family, take no notice of it; for it will be done merely to get from you what I have told you to do. He may perhaps even go so far as to say he knows where your father is—"

"My father!" exclaimed Fanny. "Why, who knows my father?"

"I say he may say so," replied Rowel, "for he will say anything; but you must not believe him. The truth is, he has found out that I am doing something for you, and he is determined to stop it if he can. But do not let him talk to you. You must leave this house as early as possible. Be cautious, above all things. I will soon see you again."

And the doctor walked away.

"What, under heaven," exclaimed Fanny, as she closed the door after him, "can the man mean? I am in danger,—and master wants to marry me,—and knows where my father is,—and I must leave here directly! What in the world am I to do? for there seems no end to trouble!"

And then, according to the regular female rule in cases of difficulty of this kind, she sat down and began to cry; and as she cried, she called to mind that Mr. Skinwell had, more particularly of late, showed himself unusually kind to her, and more so, indeed, than she ought to suffer.

Shortly afterwards Skinwell walked in. He had met Dr. Rowel in a part of the road which warranted some suspicion that the latter might

have been up to his house, and accordingly he proceeded to question Fanny on the subject. After an awkward attempt or two to evade his inquiries, she at length declared, that he came only upon some business which related merely to herself, and therefore she could not explain it.

"There is no occasion," replied he, "to explain it to me. I know it well enough. That man is a scoundrel, Fanny,—worse by ten times ten multiplied than any body would imagine."

"The very thing," thought she, "that the doctor said of you."

"Since so much has come out as this," continued Skinwell, "and my plan is about ripe, I do not hesitate to say that, that man has been the ruin of you and your family; and, but for him, you yourself would at this very time have been—there is no knowing—anything but what you are. Depend upon it, my dear, many a better man than Doctor Rowel has died in a hempen neckcloth."

The girl paid little regard to all this, for it was precisely the same as her friend the doctor had declared he *would* say; and yet she felt doubtful which of the two to believe,—or were they not alike dishonest?

Skinwell's profession had not left him so heedless an observer of human nature, as not to remark that instead of his disclosures, as he conceived them to be, being received with astonishment and wonder, Fanny took comparatively little notice of them. However, he persevered,

"As you and the doctor are so intimate, then," continued he, "of course he has told you something of your own history. Has he ever told you you have a father living?"

Fanny stood mute.

"He never told you that?" the lawyer repeated.

"Oh no!" exclaimed Fanny; "but if I truly have a father, do tell me where he is, and I will do anything in the world for you!"

Now was the lawyer's time to make his proposals, which he did at some length, promising that, in case they were agreed to, he would tell her where her father was,—he would liberate him from a dungeon worse than any prison, and recover for him and herself the property that was now unjustly withheld from them.

Fanny hung her head and blushed, and felt as though she could laugh or cry, or do both perhaps together; but she could not speak.

"Well," continued Skinwell, "I know what you think,—it is natural enough. I admit that I am a little older than I was twenty years ago, and probably not quite so eyeable to look upon as when I paid more attention to personal appearances; but the time was when I had my day as well as others, and in fact, was considered one of the best in Bramleigh."

Since it is not what a man *has been* but what he is, that maids are apt in these cases to consider, we need not feel surprised that the lawyer's recommendation of himself failed to be considered a recommendation by her to whom it was addressed; and, though the temptation offered was great enough, she calmly, yet firm'y rejected any idea of agreeing to the terms proposed. Her refusal aroused the lawyer's indignation, and for the time, converted the only man who could prove eminently useful to her as a friend into a bitter enemy. He vowed that her father's bones should rot on the floor where he lay, before he would open his lips to assist him; and, declaring that Fanny would live to repent her determination, he left the room.

CHAPTER III.

Colin takes steps to extricate Fanny from her difficulties; but is interrupted by a fearful occurrence which threatens to make Doctor Rowel triumphant.

HAVING in some degree recovered from the terror inspired by Skinwell's denunciation, Fanny occupied herself in calling together all the fragments of information of which she had thus strangely been put in possession, and in endeavouring so to fit the broken pieces together as to make something like an intelligible whole. In this attempt she necessarily failed. The whole matter was a maze, a mystery,—a jargon of seeming truth and certain falsehood,—of things partly consistent and partly contradictory. In this state of uncertainty she determined to consult Colin upon the steps most advisable to be taken; for though he was now only about eighteen in actual years, yet his early mental development and his plain manly honesty entitled him to be considered upon an equality with many who were several years his seniors. A note was accordingly despatched by the first convenient carriage to Whinmoor, requesting Colin to pay a visit to Bramleigh at the earliest possible opportunity.

Such an opportunity very fortunately occurred within the ensuing week, and on a day which, by a lucky coincidence, Mr. Skinwell himself had chosen for a drive, on business, to the city of York. Ample opportunity was thus afforded to the young people to discuss the subject of their meeting at its full length, and in perfect secrecy.

Troubled as Fanny had been in her own mind to devise what course to pursue under the seemingly difficult circumstances in which she was placed, she had no sooner related them to Colin, than that youth declared that the steps proper to be taken were as clearly chalked out as the track of a plough along the fields.

"Leave it to me," said he, "and I will find it all out very soon. In the first place, I shall ask my mother whether *she* ever knew anything of your father; for it is plain that she must know something of the place you came from. If that does not answer, I should then ask Mr. Skinwell and Dr. Rowel. The truth is all that would be required of them, and surely people cannot very well refuse to tell the truth in such a case as this. But let us try my mother first. Shall I go down to her now?"

To this proposition Fanny assented; and, while she remained behind in a state of anxious hope and expectation, Colin went onwards to Mrs. Clink's for the purpose of obtaining the required information.

A dreary pause of an hour or more, which to Fanny's imagination appeared half a day, followed Colin's departure. "Now," thought she, after a little interval of time, "he has arrived there; now he is talking about it to his mother: and now, perhaps, she is telling him what she would never tell me, though I often asked her ever so particularly about it." And then, again, as time wore away, and one five minutes after another were scored on the side of that great eternity the Past, she thought he must be coming back, she mistook the footsteps of every passer-by for his, and every distant external sound as the wished-for herald of his approach. At length, as she began to grow heart-sick with anxiety, he came.

"Has she told you anything?" asked Fanny, the moment she saw him.

"Not much," he replied, "and that of no great consequence."

"Ay, I feared it would be so! Then what is it, Colin?"

"She knows nothing whatever of your father, that is certain. She never did know him, nor your mother either."

Fanny sighed, and then asked timidly,

"Did she say anything about me, then?"

"Why, yes,—she did; though it is not of very pleasant hearing; and besides, it is not of any consequence, particularly——"

"But *do* tell me,—you must tell me!" exclaimed Fanny. "I do not care what it is; it cannot hurt me now."

"Well then" returned Colin, "the truth is this——"

"Fanny sat down in a chair; and as she gazed intently on Colin's features while he spoke, her bosom heaved and fell as though some sentence of punishment was being passed upon her.

"My mother," continued the youth, "has told me that she first had you when you were three or four years old, as near as she could guess. At that time she lived in a little yard near Park-lane in Leeds, with her sister, who died shortly afterwards. One dark night in the autumn, and almost about bed-time, she and her sister heard a stirring and talking amongst the neighbours in the yard, and the crying of a little child. They went out to see what was the matter, and found some women with candles in their hands round a little girl that was lost;—this child was you, Fanny. Though, how you had been lost, or how you came there, they could not tell. My mother says she asked you if you knew who brought you there, and you said something that they thought meant 'uncle brought me;' but they could not be certain about it; they made out, however, that your name was Fanny Woodruff, as you had been taught to speak that much plainer than anything else. As all the poor people in the yard had families of their own, except my mother and her sister, they took you in for that night; or, as they thought, until somebody should own you. Next morning the circumstance was made known in all the ways they could think of or afford to pay for; but day after day passed on, and week after week, and they were none the forwarder for their trouble, until at last it died away, and became certain, as proved to be the case, that she would have to keep you always. Some people, Fanny, wanted to persuade her to take you to the work-house."—Fanny burst into tears. —"But my mother had got used to you by that time, and would not do it. Besides, her sister died, and she wished her on her death-bed to keep you; 'for, perhaps, Anne,' said she to my mother, 'you may find it all out in the end.' My mother," added Colin, "says she believes that dying people very often speak like prophets. She resolved, therefore, to keep you from that time to this."

"And yet," added Fanny, in a mingled feeling of jest and earnest, "there seems to be small chance of the prophecy coming true."

Before Colin could reply, a noise without was heard of the tread of numerous feet, mingled with the sound of carriage wheels as they slowly advanced down the road, cracking and crushing the dry gravel. Then came a hurried rap at the door. Fanny flew to it, but it was already opened. A little crowd had gathered outside, and every face looked solemn and anxious. Some peeped down the passage, and others at the contents of a gig which had stopped before the house. She looked out.

The shafts were snapped asunder; the harness broken; the horse, led by a farming man, was covered with foam and dust and mud. He bled at the mouth, and looked fierce and angry, though subdued. In the gig itself lay the body of her master the lawyer, insensible, and supported on the knee of a second farming man. Fanny ran into the house again, terrified at the sight, and summoned Colin, the lawyer's clerk, and an under servant girl to his assistance. Shortly afterwards the body was carefully lifted out and carried up stairs. Before this, a man had been dispatched to obtain the speedy assistance of the proprietor of the lunatic asylum at Nabbfield.

What an opportunity for Dr. Rowel was presented here to stifle Fanny's evidence for ever!

CHAPTER IV.

Relates the triumph of the Doctor, and the manner in which he achieved it.—Lawyer Skinwell's death-bed, and what happened there.

THE evening was warm and fine! and the gentle slope, on the top of which Dr. Rowel's establishment stood, was coloured with the setting light of the sun; as, with the glass-doors, which opened from his drawing-room, upon the lawn, thrown wide back to admit the scarcely stirring air,—the doctor himself sat near it and alone, in an attitude of thought, meditating mischief. A dash of vermilion coloured light shot athwart the lower part of his person, while the upper portion was covered with that kind of illuminated shadow, that clear obscure, which, to the delicate perception of a painter, constitutes one of Nature's greatest beauties. But the thoughts and reflections in which the doctor indulged very deeply at variance with those which the scene before him, and the character of the hour, was calculated to suggest. It was not with him—"how much do I now enjoy?" but the morose reflection—"how long shall I enjoy it?" His present happiness was swallowed up in the anticipation of possible coming evil.

"What matters it," thought he, "when to-morrow, perhaps, that treacherous villain may make everything known? Nay, how do I know he has not done so already. True, I have had him watched. I know everything he has done, and something that he has said; and this very day again he is gone to York. To-morrow I may wake to be arrested,—to have my house searched, and Woodruff set at liberty."

And as the doctor thus mused, the door opened, and a stranger was ushered in.

"Doctor," said he in a hurried tone, "lawyer Skinwell has just got thrown out of his gig, and is almost killed. He has been insensible ever since."

"Ah! impossible!" exclaimed Rowel, starting to his feet with surprise. "Are you sure, man?"

"It is quite true, sir," replied he, as though scarcely knowing what to make of the doctor's strange manner, the latter gentleman regarding him for a moment with an eye of unaccountable incredulity; for the idea had instantaneously flashed across his mind that he might be deceived by his own imagination, and that it was only the devil that was tempting him. A minute or two elapsed; when, recovering himself, he re-

plied in a more subdued and professional tone, "I will be there immediately," on which the man disappeared.

"Now then," thought Rowel, "is the time! Had I asked for it,—designed it myself,—I could not have made it better. Thrown out, and insensible. He cannot, therefore, know anything of what I do. And as nobody else knows of our differences, nobody will think otherwise than that I am doing for the best. Who shall question my practice? Even if it be inquired into,—if it come to anything that way, they may arraign my judgment, but can do nothing else."

The doctor went immediately into his dispensary, dismissed his assistant upon some frivolous errand, and closed the door after him. Some minutes he remained compounding drugs with his own hand; after which he mounted his pony, which had been saddled in the mean time, and rode rapidly off to the lawyer's house.

"Send all these people out!" somewhat sharply exclaimed the doctor as, in passing up stairs, he cast his eye upon the numerous assembly of "sympathisers," who had gathered in the passage and about the foot of the staircase. Fanny dismissed them, and then, accompanied by Colin, went up stairs into the room in which the unfortunate man had been laid upon a bed, and whither also Dr. Rowel had directed his steps.

In the first place, the lawyer was very copiously bled; after which the doctor administered a powder with his own hand, and gave instructions that, in the course of about an hour, if Mr. Skinwell appeared more recovered, another of a similar description should be given. He then very strictly charged Fanny not to allow any person to visit him, and to prevent him talking in case he should attempt to speak, as silence and quietness were highly essential to any patient in his condition.—Promising that he should call again in the course of the night, the doctor then took his leave, though not till he had privately drawn Fanny aside, and fully satisfied himself that Mr. Skinwell had not discovered to her any material portion of that secret which he so greatly dreaded should come to her knowledge.

During several hours the unfortunate man continued much the same as before; but about midnight he rallied. There was nobody in the room except Fanny and the servant girl. Colin had taken his leave long before; and Skinwell's stripling clerk, who was introduced to the reader at the commencement of this story, and who had now grown up into a tame, spiritless, and crest-fallen man, was sitting below in the kitchen, seeking refuge from the whereases and aforesaid of the law in the pleasant pages of Joseph Andrews.

Mr. Skinwell, as I have said, rallied a little. He looked wildly about as though seeking for assurance of the locality of the place he was in, and then feebly beckoned Fanny to bring her ear near him.

"Who has been to me?" he whispered.

"Only Dr. Rowel, sir," answered Fanny assuringly.

"Then I am a dead man!" exclaimed the lawyer, bursting into a flood of tears. "Oh Heaven, forgive my sins as I forgive all those who have sinned against me!" And he forced his head into the pillow as though he would bury it out of sight. The foam gathered upon his blue lips, and his teeth snapped together with a sound that made the girl's blood turn.—"Oh, what has he given me? my breath is hotter than fire.—The flames eats my heart out!—water,—water!"

"No, no!" cried an eager voice behind, "'twill kill him!" and Dr. Rowel strode across the room. Fanny saw him and his looks terrified

her. The sedateness of the experienced physician, which no circumstances of this kind can generally disturb, was all gone. He breathed half-convulsively through his opened mouth and dilated nostrils; shining beads of water that momentarily glistened in the lamplight, stood upon his forehead; and several times successively, as he crossed the room, he passed his hand with instinctive energy over the sides of his temples, so as to cast the hair which clustered there backwards, as though his burning brain sought closer contract with the cool common air. He stood by the bedside. Skinwell rolled round his eyes, and strove to cry, "You've poisoned me!" But the doctor rapidly closed his hand over the sick man's mouth, and drowned his failing voice.

Fanny stood petrified with horror; while the servant-girl rushed screaming out of the room. The doctor still kept his open hand on Skinwell's mouth, while the dying man strove to set himself free by violent motions of the head and writhings of the body. A stifled call on the name of Fanny at length broke out from his muffled lips.

"Go out! leave me!" fiercely cried Rowel to the horrified young woman; but she did not obey him.

"Fanny!" again escaped the lawyer's lips.

The sight, the voice, the desperate sense that came upon her all at once that Rowel was killing his patient, nerved her with more than woman's courage and ten times woman's ordinary strength. She rushed frantically to the opposite side of the bed from that on which the doctor stood, and violently seized his wrists.

"Away, woman!" he cried, suddenly turning all his efforts against her, in the endeavour to free his hands and strike her down. But she held him tightly. Curses upon her! whispered almost as from the inmost soul, but deadly and pregnant with hellish meaning, hissed through the doctor's teeth, which showed between his lips clenched like a workman's vice. Fanny prayed mentally for strength to hold him. As they struggled, the sick man beneath them spoke.

"Fanny—your father——"

Rowel threw the whole weight of his body upon him to stop that tongue. He could not.

"Your father is in Rowel's——"

"It's a lie!—a lie!—a lie!—a lie!" cried the doctor in rapid succession, to render the words inaudible.

Their struggle grew more desperate, and Fanny could not hold much longer: the unwanton muscles would not obey her will to gripe. They were overstrained, and growing useless. At the same time the doctor wrenched more furiously than ever. The dying man beneath him gurgled in the throat for breath, and tossed in muscular convulsions beneath the clothes. At last he got himself to the edge of the bed, and by a sudden and last violent effort, struck himself against the doctor so forcibly as to loose him from the hands of Fanny, and throw him several paces from the bed. The lawyer threw himself upright, and with his dim half-dead eyes fixed on Fanny, and his finger turning to point at Rowel, he cried with his last breath, "In his madhouse!—his madhouse!" and sank back to groan and die.

Fanny stood a moment, and then fell, like a stone, insensible to the ground.

Presently the clerk and the maid-servant were in the room. Doctor Rowel had just folded up the bed-clothes.

"Take that girl up," said he calmly, "she has fainted at this sight of death. Your master is gone, young man. I did not think, at first, he would see the night over. Give her some cold water; sprinkle her temples, and carry her to bed, and then send for somebody to lay this corpse out. Before morning it will be cold."

As the doctor said this, he gathered up such of the powders as had not been administered, and put them in his pocket. At the same time Fanny was carried away, according to his directions, and placed on the bed in her own room. Dr. Rowel followed, and employed himself in restoring her. When Fanny first opened her eyes and saw him bending over her, she shrieked, and sunk again. Again she was recovered.

"Do leave me," she said. "Do go away, or I shall die."

"But I have something to say to you, my dear," observed the doctor, with an assumed sweetness of tone. "Now quiet yourself, and let us get over this agitation. You will never be better till you get calmer."

"Then pray leave me," again replied Fanny, "and I then may be quiet. Is master any better?"

"Yes—yes," the doctor answered; "but never mind him. You should not have interfered with me, Fanny. He was delirious, outrageous. I was obliged to hold him down."

"He said something about my father," observed Fanny in a faint voice. "I heard him say it."

"Nothing—nothing, I assure you!" the doctor exclaimed. "He was delirious. Now, quiet yourself, and do not talk any more to night. Say nothing about it; and another day, when you are better, you shall convince yourself, for Mrs. Rowel shall take you all over my house—you shall see everybody in it—and prove to you that your father cannot be there. As I told you some time ago, I know something about you, and will take care to see you righted as far as I can; but then you must not listen to the wild nonsense of a man who did not know what he was talking about: it ruins every thing."

Fanny was silent; but she still beheld, as in a vivid picture, the corpse-like figure of the lawyer sitting up in bed, its glazed eyes upon her, and its finger pointing towards that man. She heard the rattle of its horny tongue as it articulated those last words, "in his madhouse!—his madhouse!" And she thought of the words of Colin's mother, which had been told to her only a few hours previously, that dying people always speak the truth. But, was he dying?

"Is he dead?" asked she.

"My dear," answered Rowel, "do not alarm yourself; but he is dead."

"O God! what have I seen!" cried the affrighted young woman, as she hid her head beneath the bedclothes, for a spirit seemed to pass before her when she heard those words, and it was that of her dead master.

The doctor departed; but in that house there was no sleep that night.

CHAPTER V.

The doctor's reflections on his return.

"WHAT safer am I now?" thought the doctor, as he pursued his way home in the dark, and reflected on all that had just transpired, and on the probable consequences of it. "To-morrow there will be a jury,—

it cannot be avoided ; and I shall be called to witness, and Fanny who saw it all, will be called also. She suspects something, and may tell all until she raises suspicions in the minds of others. Would that she too were out of the way, and then—then, I should be finally secure !”

But as he thus thought on another death, the dread of the last came strongly upon him ; and his skin seemed to creep upon his bones. He fancied there was a body lying on the road, and several times he checked his horse to avoid trampling upon it, or turned him suddenly aside in order to pass it by. He could see the shadowy lineaments of the man he had murdered flickering about in the doubtful air, with the very folds of the bed-clothes which his own hand had gathered round it, pictured in misty but accurate lines, like an artist's first sketch emerging from a ground of dark and indistinct space. He grew anxious to get home. He wondered how it was that never in his life before had any sight so haunted him, and yet he had seen many worse agonies than that,—many. Yes ; he had seen old sinners die,—stubborn and unrepentant to the last ; he had seen them die and make no sign of hope of Heaven's grace. And he had seen young maids die of very terror at the thought and name of death. Yet these were nothing. They were happiness itself to what he had witnessed that night.

When he arrived at home, his wife remarked that he looked pale and ill.

“ No, my dear,” he replied, “ I am very well indeed,—wonderfully well. I never felt better in my life. I can assure you, you are mistaken.” He sat down to his supper ; but as he tried to carve, his knife slipped, and he did not try it again. The face of the lawyer seemed to be over the table, dancing about it in the broad beams of the candle-light.

“ You tremble, Harry !” cried his wife ; “ your hand shakes. How did you leave Skinwell ?”

“ He is dead.”

“ Dead !”

“ Yes, he is gone. A concussion of the brain has taken him off. It was a terrible fall indeed.”

“ But how sudden !” exclaimed she.

“ People will die suddenly sometimes,” replied the doctor ; “ and, especially when pitched headlong out of a gig on a stony road. Now I think of it, let me tell you, my dear, that to-morrow, perhaps, or on some early day, I shall want you to show a young woman down in the village here, all over the house. I wish her to see the patients. Do not ask any questions now, I have particular reasons for it. I only have to request of you very particularly, when she does come, to make no inquiries of her of any kind, nor to answer any questions she may put to you. It is of great importance to yourself as well as to me ; and more so indeed than you can be aware of just now, so that it is unnecessary to insist further upon it.”

The wife promised strict compliance with his injunctions, as it was no very unusual thing for her thus to be requested to take a blind part in the performance of some mystery or other in the establishment of which no one knew the bottom save Dr. Rowel himself. By this combination of secrecy with his wife, and of apparent openness and candour towards Fanny, he trusted to convince the latter young woman that the communication which the dying man had made respecting her father, was false and utterly without foundation. In adopting this bold course, it is evi-

dent that the doctor laid himself open to the possibility at least of a discovery; yet it was clearly the safest plan which, under the circumstances, he could adopt. The opinions which his wife entertained respecting the sanity of the unfortunate James Woodruff rendered it highly necessary, not only that the name and relationship of the visitor to whom he had promised an inspection of his house should be unknown to her but also that no suspicion should be excited by any attempt on his part to prevent James Woodruff's being seen by Fanny along with all the other patients; since the very fact of one of them being purposely withheld would of itself give room for doubt; while, from an interview between them he had nothing to fear, since in his opinion it was a moral impossibility that either father or daughter should recognise the other.

CHAPTER VI.

A jury of blockheads sits on the body of Skinwell. Colin advises Fanny Woodruff upon a subject of some importance.

A CORONER's jury was summoned to hold an inquest at the tavern at Bramleigh, on the body of Mr. Skinwell. The men composing this jury were such ignorant louts, that Dr. Rowel, on being called before them, soon succeeded in so far mistifying their perceptions, that they unanimously determined it to be quite useless to call any other witnesses than one or two of those who saw the accident. The coroner himself was an indolent and superficial person, and, under pretence of having other inquiries to hold a few miles off, seemed anxious to hurry the present inquiry to a conclusion. Fanny remained outside during the deliberation, and though it was once or twice suggested that her evidence might prove important, the coroner peremptorily refused to listen to it, and especially as Doctor Rowel took the liberty of hinting that any statement which she might make could not prove of the least value after his own lucid and professional exposition of the state of the diseased on his being brought home. Accordingly, a verdict of "Accidental Death" was recorded; and Doctor Rowel returned to Nabbfield highly gratified in secret with the result of the inquiry.

But, as the success of guilt affords no pleasant matter for reflection, I will proceed to relate something concerning a better and more virtuous character.

The story of Lawyer Skinwell's death soon spread abroad, and reached the farm at Whinmoor in its progress. When Colin became acquainted with the facts, he necessarily concluded that Fanny would again be homeless, and that his advice and assistance might prove useful to her. He accordingly seized the first opportunity that presented itself for taking a walk to Bramleigh, which occurred about a week after the dreadful event just related. During that time Fanny had been wishing day and night to see him, but had been too much occupied amidst the circumstances which this unexpected change had brought about, to be enabled to do more than wish for his coming. Everything had, of course, been left in some confusion. Nor were there any known relations of her late master to whom application could be made to take his affairs under their management. Skinwell had come to the village, unknown, when a young man, and was generally understood to say that indeed, to the best of his knowledge and belief, he was the last of his family.

Under these circumstances both Fanny and the poor clerk would have

felt somewhat embarrassed in what manner to proceed, had not Mr. Longstaff, the steward, and the landlord of the Cock and Bottle, taken an early opportunity, after the lawyer's death, to call at the house, and formally announce to the poor clerk himself that they were legal witnesses to a will which the deceased had made some time ago in *his* favour; and which, after providing for all debts and expenses, left to him the residue and the business together. The document thus spoken of was soon found amongst his private papers; and, as nobody came forward to dispute and litigate over the poor man's corpse, as is usually the case when anybody has a small matter to leave behind him, the affairs of the household were soon placed in a way for being carried on as usual; and, especially as Fanny consented to remain for the present with the lawyer's successor on the same terms as she had formerly agreed upon with him.

These arrangements had been made when Colin arrived; and, therefore the difficulties in which he expected to find Fanny were entirely obviated. But there was another and a far more dreadful subject to engage his attention, which he could not possibly have anticipated, namely, the communication made by the dying man respecting her father, and the horrible scene which she had witnessed at the time that communication was made. Partly from a conscientious fear of doing any one an injustice, and partly from doubt whether, after all, the doctor really was or was not guilty, she had not hitherto mentioned the subject to any one, though it lay on her mind like a burden which would allow no rest until it was shaken off. If the lawyer had spoken truth, was it not unjust to his memory to make no use of what he had spoken? And if she really had a father living, and that father was confined in a madhouse, what could she think of herself were she not to make an effort for his deliverance?

On his arrival, Colin thought Fanny looked ill and anxious; and that she spoke less freely to him than heretofore. He felt surprised to hear her allude to Doctor Rowel in a manner so changed from that in which she had always spoken of him formerly. Then it was as a friend, a helper; one from whom, above all others living, she had the most to hope for, and to whom she ought to feel most grateful. But now she mentioned the very name with dread, and seemed to shudder whenever the recollection of his presence in that house came across her mind. All this raised Colin's curiosity, and stimulated his inquiries. Question after question did he put to her, until the vivid recollection of the scene that had passed and the keener sense of her father's situation, which this conversation awakened, brought her again to tears, and amidst many sobs and interruptions she at last related to the horror-stricken youth the whole story of her late master's death-bed communication. During the recital Colin turned pale as ashes, and when it was done,

"I'm sure he murdered him!" he exclaimed, "and we shall find it all true about your father. Think as you like about it, but that doctor tried to stop his mouth only to prevent him telling you. Take him at his word, Fanny, and let him show you over his house."

Fanny made no reply. She scarcely heard his words, for in imagination she fancied herself before the little cell that held her father; she thought of him as a madman whom she dared not touch, and scarcely even look at; one who, though her own parent, had not sense enough left to talk even like a little child. And as she thus thought, the tears silently rolled down her cheeks. She longed for the time to arrive, but dreaded the trial to which it might expose her.

Having arranged that they should meet again as early as possible after

her visit to the madhouse, Colin Clink took his farewell of Fanny and, on quitting the house, proceeded immediately in the direction of the old hall of Kiddal, with the intention of carrying out another part of his plan.

CHAPTER VII.

Colin seeks an interview with Squire Lupton. An unexpected adventure takes place, which raises him to the station of a hero, and promises great things to come.

WHEN Colin arrived at Kiddal Hall, Mr. Lupton was quietly reposing himself on a small couch placed near the wide-open window of his drawing-room, and inhaling the fragrance of the great "wicked weed" from a long Turkish pipe, whose voluminous folds lay like a sleeping serpent on the ground beside him. At some distance from him, close to the door, and unperceived by the squire, stood an individual of short stature, dressed in a coat that reached nearly to his knees; inexpressibles that descended to the same point, blue worsted stockings, and laced-up boots. His hat was placed upon its crown on the floor beside him, as though the owner, in so disposing of it, meditated a stay of some duration.

"Is that Mr. Lupton?" demanded a gruff Johnsonian voice.

"Who the d—l is that?" exclaimed the Squire, puffing the smoke away from his mouth, and looking eagerly in the direction whence the voice proceeded.

"Nay—nay, now!" was the reply he received, "it signifies nothing to you who I am, for if a man gets justice done him for his crimes, what can it matter to him whose hand does it?"

"How did you come here, fellow?" again asked the Squire.

The little old man replied,

"Never mind asking me how I got here,—that is my business and not yours. I am here, and that is enough."

"But, what are you?—who are you?—what have you come here for?"

"Well—well! if you ask me what I am, I can tell you; I am a *father*. And, if I were to tell you what you are, sir, I should say you are an unprincipled man, and unworthy of your station: a man that, because he has power in his hands, can insult poverty, and betray it to ruin, under the pretence of doing it a service. Does your recollection extend as far back as sixteen or eighteen years ago?"

Instead of answering this question, Mr. Lupton laid aside his pipe, rose from his seat, and advanced towards the little man in the middle of the room, extending his hand in an authoritative manner.

"Come, come, fellow! go away. Save me the trouble of putting you out."

"You put me out, sir!" tauntingly replied his strange visitor; "it is more than you dare undertake to do if all your servants were about you; and, as it is, remember there is not one. Keep your hands off me, or I shall make you repent it. You have touched too much of my blood already; and now I have called for some of yours. Look to yourself. I'll be fair with you."

As he thus spoke he drew something from the pocket of his long coat, which Mr. Lupton thought, from the slight glance he caught of it in the twilight, to be a pistol. The sight nerved him to desperation, and suddenly he sprang forwards to strike or seize the man before him. But the latter was too expert; he slipped aside, and Mr. Lupton fell forwards with the impetus of his motion almost to the ground. The cocking of

the pistol, and the opening of the room door were heard at the same instant. Flash went the deadly powder, slightly illuminating the apartment, and showing a *third* party standing against the old man in the long coat, who had struck the pistol aside with his hand, and thus diverted what otherwise would have proved a deadly aim. That third person was Colin Clink. He had reached the hall a minute or two before; and one of the servants, who knew him, had conducted him upstairs, under the belief that the squire was alone,—for the old man had obtained his audience secretly. While in the passage outside, however, they overheard the latter part of the conversation just related, which induced Colin to rush in, and thus was he instrumental in saving the life of his own father—though unknown to himself—from the deadly hand—equally unknown to him—of his own grandfather.

Jerry Clink had recently returned from New South Wales; and during all the years of his banishment had kept

“The patient watch, the vigil long,
Of him who treasures up a wrong.”

No sooner did Jerry find that the pistol had failed in its intended work, and that Mr. Lupton, who was a powerful man, was again upon his legs, than he dashed Colin furiously aside, and retreated towards the window. The Squire followed him, and was himself followed respectively by Colin and the servant. They endeavoured to pin the old man in a corner, but their first efforts did not succeed. He strove to rush between them, and to escape at the door. Lights now glanced along the passage, and on the staircase. Other servants were hurrying forwards, having been brought up by the report of fire arms. Escape that way was now impossible.—What could he do? There was the window—the only chance. Nobody so much as dreamed that he would go out there, for it was twenty feet or more from the ground. He approached it. The resolution and the action were one. In an instant his body darkened the open space as he leaped through, and he was gone! The spectators stood still some moments,—for into mere spectators did this daring and desperate leap transform them all. They then ran to the window. There lay a dark substance on the ground beneath. It moved. It got up. They watched it; and, in the height of their amazement, never thought of running out to seize it. It looked up and laughed with derision in their faces as it hastened off. Some of them now ran down stairs in pursuit. It was deep twilight, and the sight of the desperado was lost. He had crossed the lawn, and got into the woods. They followed with guns and staves, but Jerry Clink was safe.

“And what young man is this?” asked Mr. Lupton, as he turned to gaze at Colin, and by the lights which now shone in the apartment beheld a noble, open countenance, and a pair of bold, dark eyes, whose look brought a flush of heat up in the Squire’s face, and made him for a moment dream that he gazed into a mirror, so much were they the counterpart of his own. “Whoever you are,” pursued the Squire, “I owe you much for this brave interposition. I am indebted to you, young man, perhaps for my life: and, certainly, for sound bones, and a whole skin. Sit down—sit down a moment. But stop; this will do at present.” And he drew out his purse containing nearly ten guineas, and tending it to Colin, “Take this, until I can do something better for you.”

“No, sir, thank you,” replied the youth. “I do not want money; and if I did I could not take it for only doing right. I came to speak to you, sir, about something else, if you will allow me.”

"Not take it!" exclaimed Mr. Lupton, in astonishment,—“then you were not born in Yorkshire, were you?”

"Yes, sir, I was," answered he: "I was born and brought up in this village, though you do not know me."

"Indeed! Why, I do not remember to have remarked you before. Who are you? What is your name?"

"Colin Clink, sir, is my name."

The squire sat down and turned away his face, so that the lad could not see it, as he asked, in an altered and somewhat tremulous voice, if Mrs. Clink, that kept the shop, was his mother?

"Yes, sir," replied Colin, "she is: but I never knew my father."

Mr. Lupton was for some moments silent. He placed his elbow on the back of his chair, and his open hand over his eyes, as if to screen them. Something had touched his bosom suddenly; but the lad knew not what. At length, and evidently with some effort, though without changing his position in the least, Mr. Lupton said,

"I cannot talk with you now, young man: that fellow has ruffled me. Take that purse, and come again some other time. I shall be from home nearly three weeks. Come again this day three weeks, and I shall have something of importance to talk to you about. Take particular notice, now, and be punctual. But what are you doing? and where do you live?"

Colin satisfied him on both these particulars. The squire continued.

"Then come as I have appointed, and your situation shall be exchanged for a better. I will make your fortune: but I cannot talk now. Come again, my boy—come again."

Colin stood a few minutes in silent suspense as to the course to be pursued. The unexpected event which had taken place had entirely defeated the purpose for which he had ventured to Kiddal Hall, while the squire's language half confounded him. Should he speak again? He dared not, except to express his thanks, and, retiring from the room, he left the squire's purse untouched upon the table.

Colin reached Whinmoor shortly before ten o'clock.

When Mr. Lupton rose from his reverie, and strode across the room, his foot struck against the bullet that had been discharged from Jerry Clink's pistol. He looked up to the wall; and, though the blow which at the critical moment Colin had struck diverted it from himself, the squire saw, with a strange sensation, for which he could not account, that it had passed through the canvass, and near the bosom of his wife, Mrs. Lupton's picture.

CHAPTER VIII.

Gives a description of Fanny's visit to the madhouse, and of her interview with her father.

AFTER a lapse of some few days, during which Mr. Lupton left the hall on his proposed brief journey,—(though not without first sending a messenger to Whinmoor with a small packet for Colin, which the latter found to contain fifteen guineas, and a repetition of the invitation to appear again at Kiddal on the day previously named,)—Fanny's arrangements for going over Dr. Rowel's establishment were completed; and according to appointment she set out one morning, early after breakfast,

and reached Nabbfield about ten o'clock. As she approached the place her heart began to throb violently, and her hands to tremble as she placed them on her bosom, as if by that action to still the poor troubled thing within. She gazed at the building as though every single stone was a separate source of fear to her; at its melancholy windows as so many eyes, out of which madness and pain looked upon the pleasant world below. As she passed along the footpath outside the boundary wall she stopped, and listened. Instead of sounds of woe, which she expected to hear from within, the blackbird and the linnet in the plantations sounded their pleasant notes there the same as elsewhere. The great and gaudy dragon-fly darted along the sunny wall, and little clouds of gnats flew in innumerable and ever-changing evolutions beneath the pendant branches of the young elms and sycamores by the road-side. When she saw the gateway she first lingered, and then stopped, to gather breath and resolution. She could not; she looked again, and then retraced her steps some yards, hoping to quiet herself, and grow more calm. She looked up at the sky: it was bright, and vast, and deep, with an intense blue, that seemed as unfathomable as eternity. She thought of her father, and then of another Father who alone could help her and sustain her in all trials. Fanny sunk down upon the bank, and clasped her hands together in silent and spontaneous prayer for assistance to meet the coming trial. She arose strengthened, calm, and assured.

As the keeper of the lodge-gate opened it to admit her, Fanny inquired, with evident signs of fear, whether the people whom she saw at some distance up the pathway, would do her any injury? These were several of the partially-recovered and harmless patients, who had been allowed to take exercise in the garden. Although Fanny's question was answered in the negative, and she was told not to be in the least afraid of them, she yet advanced up the pathway with a quick-beating heart, and a timorous step. As she approached them, several of the people held up their heads and gazed half-vacantly at her.

Fanny hurried along with increased rapidity, and reached the doctor's house without interruption. She rung the bell, and stood a long time before anybody answered it, though she knew not it was more than a moment, so occupied was her mind with the thoughts of what was about to ensue. "If my father be here," thought she—"If I should see him, and hear him say his name is the same as mine, what in the world shall I do? How shall I conduct myself? What shall I say to him?" and, as she thus thought, the door opened, and Fanny was ushered into an elegantly-furnished room, such as she had not before seen, and at the same time, into the presence of the doctor's wife.

As I have before stated that the visit had been previously arranged, Mrs. Rowel was of course prepared to conduct her almost immediately over the establishment. As she successively passed through open rooms in which the more harmless patients were assembled—some laughing and playful, others desponding and weeping over again their troubles of former days—and thence was conducted down gloomy ranges of cells, the dim light of which just served to show the fairest of God's creations writhing in foul struggles with the demon of madness—or, yet more remotely, was taken to behold sights which humanity forbids me to describe, but which, once seen, can never be forgotten;—as all this, I repeat, passed before the affrighted eyes of Fanny, and brought up to her mind

still more vividly the picture of her own father, it was with the greatest difficulty she could hide her emotion from those who accompanied her.

Fanny and the doctor's wife now proceeded together, and unaccompanied, down that winding passage which led to the yard where James Woodruff obtained all of daylight and air which he had enjoyed during many years. The door was opened to the dazzling light of midsummer time, so that Fanny could scarcely see, after being so long in the dungeon-like places of that dreary mansion. But there stood the black old yew-tree, looking as if carved out of ebony, amid the blaze of a mid-day sun, and under its deep hard shadow lay a man, motionless as might be the monumental effigy in some old church aisle; his eyes upon the bright space above him, and his hands fast bound across his breast. As the noise occasioned by the approach of Fanny and Mrs. Rowel reached his ear, he gently turned his head, and displayed to the gaze of Fanny a countenance pale and thoughtful, surrounded by a profusion of deep black hair, and brightened by a pair of eyes of the same hue, that looked like spots of jet set in a face of alabaster.

"And is he," remarked Fanny, as she turned toward her conductress, "is he as wild as those men we have seen in the cells?"

"The doctor," replied Mrs. Rowel, "says he is quite insane; though for myself I sometimes think he talks as properly and sensibly as you or I might do. But then Mr. Rowel says that no dependence is to be placed upon that, because people who are quite out of their senses will sometimes appear as reasonable in their conversation as any other person."

This declaration somewhat startled Fanny's faith in the virtue of common sense; and, as if seeking for an illustration of this strange doctrine in the person before her, she again turned to the yew-tree. She started. Those coal-black eyes were still upon her, fixed, and apparently full of some mysterious meaning. She dreaded lest the madman should be meditating wrong, against her, and instinctively seized the arm of the doctor's wife.

"Do not be alarmed," observed the latter, encouragingly; "he will do you no injury in the world. He looks more frightful than he is, a great deal: his hair makes him look so: but he and I have had many conversations together. I will try if he will speak, and then you can hear how these mad people talk. James!" raising her voice, "how do you do to-day?"

He rolled round on his back, and by a sudden and peculiar action, which long captivity and experience alone could have rendered familiar to him, leaped instantaneously up without the assistance of his arms. Fanny shrunk convulsively within the door, in dread lest he should approach her.

"Stand still, my dear," remarked her companion; "there is not the least danger from him. Now, *do* be assured, and come forward."

Fanny obeyed with trembling, especially when she saw the man advance toward them with the intention, apparently, of addressing either her or her conductress. He spoke, however, in the first instance, to the latter.

"Good morning, good lady, and to your young companion. How bright and beautiful the day is! How does the world look beyond these walls? Beautiful, I dare say: glorious far beyond any thought of mine, for I have almost forgotten what robe the earth wears in summer time.

Yet it is full of delight even on this arid sand, and between these burning walls. And so, young lady," and James Woodruff, turned his dark eyes upon Fanny's countenance as he spoke in a more jesting, yet melancholy strain, "you have come to look at me as a curiosity and a show?"

"Oh no, sir!" exclaimed she, in a hurried tone, and with her face deepening with blushes, "I—I—I am very glad to see you, sir."

"Are you?" exclaimed Woodruff, earnestly. "Then Heaven bless that heart, and reward you with its choicest gifts, for feeling glad to see such an unfortunate thing as I! Glad to see me! Why, that is more than any one has said these many years! Forgive me, young woman; but in your face I see over again the good angel that delivered Peter from his dungeon, and it is a blessing to my eyes to look upon one like you. I am not mad, young lady; indeed I am not. Nay, do not shrink. I would dash this head against the wall sooner than dream of injury to you. I had a wife once at your age: your youth brings her back again, till I could think she had come from heaven to plead for me! I have been here twenty winters—I have given up all my land and money—everything but life—for liberty, and have still been basely deceived! Now do not, for the love of God and of justice! do not doubt me. I am not mad. I never was. I was stolen from my home, and from my daughter—a child—a little child."

Fanny's brain grew dizzy. She clung to her companion for support.

"Let us go, my dear," said Mrs. Rowel. "You cannot bear it. James, why do you talk so?"

"I will not go!" cried Fanny, eagerly, and struggling hard to rally herself. "Tell me your name—your name!" added she, addressing the captive.

"Woodruff!" cried the poor prisoner.

Fanny's glazing eyes were fixed on him for an instant—she sprung forward with a shriek, and fell at full length on the ground, and, as though dead, at his feet!

Mrs. Rowel, and the unfortunate James Woodruff, stood equally astonished. The latter attempted to raise Fanny: he could not—his arms were bound—and he laughed. But the next instant, as he requested the mistress of the mansion to do so, he stooped over the insensible body before him, and burst into a flood of tears.

"Who is she?" he demanded. "What soul of beauty is it?"

"I do not know, James," replied the lady; "she is a stranger to me."

"Would that I could touch her cheek with my finger!" said Woodruff. "She is good—good indeed!"

In the meantime, Robson had answered the call of Mrs. Rowel, and come to her assistance.

"Carry her into the house. Or, stay, fetch water," said the lady; "she had better be recovered here," and Robson was accordingly despatched for a glass of water, with which he soon returned. It was applied to her lips, and partially sprinkled on her forehead. After a time she began to recover; she opened her eyes, looked round, and spoke.

"Where is he?"

"Here! I am here, young lady," replied Woodruff, as he looked her earnestly in the face to fix her attention. "What of me?"

"My father!" exclaimed Fanny, as she again sunk into a state of insensibility.

"Father!" repeated Woodruff—"my father! I her father! She my daughter!" He strove to wrench his arms free to clasp her to his bosom, but again he could not.

"Take her away, Robson," said the lady of the house. "What does all this mean? Take her away!—take her away!"

And Fanny was carried back by the strong man to the room into which she had at first been introduced; while James Woodruff remained standing upon that spot, gazing on that ground where his child had lain, as though the great world contained in it no other place which, even to him, deserved for a moment to be looked upon.

CHAPTER IX.

Is so very necessary between the eighth and tenth, that it could not possibly be dispensed with.

WHEN Fanny was sufficiently recovered, the lady of the house questioned her very particularly upon the circumstances that had occurred, and exhibited a great deal of laudable curiosity to be fully enlightened touching the mystery that had been enacted before her. The young woman would fain have kept it to herself; but too much had already passed in the presence of Mrs. Rowel to render such a line of conduct altogether practicable. Nevertheless, it was not until a faithful promise of secrecy had been made on the part of the doctor's wife, that Fanny was induced to communicate to her so much of her story as was needful to render something like an intelligible whole. In this account she omitted any mention of the source from whence the information respecting her father had been obtained; and also forebore making the most distant allusion to the death of her late master, or to the part which she secretly believed the doctor had taken in that event.

The lady listened to her narrative with great admiration, and when it was concluded, seized both her hands in an affectionate manner, and exclaimed,

"Then, my dear, you are my niece:—the doctor is your own uncle, for your mother and he were brother and sister."

This information, as may be readily supposed, astonished Fanny, though it did not affect her so much as the discovery of her father made just before. She thought of her own uncle being a murderer;—she regretted ever having mentioned the subject to Colin, and resolved never to allude to it again before any one. She dreaded the very thought that, bad as he was, her own uncle should owe to her his degradation, and an ignominious death on a public scaffold. The thought of all this she could not endure; and, in order to avert the possibility of danger from any unexpected quarter, she now begged of the doctor's wife to hide from her husband the fact that she *had* discovered her father in those cells, lest it might lead to a still worse danger, the bare possibility of which she dreaded to think upon. Mrs. Rowel not only promised to do all this—a promise which eventually she fulfilled—but also gave Fanny the fullest assurance that she would exercise her utmost endeavours in the attempt to prevail upon her husband to set James Woodruff at liberty. For all this Fanny returned her most heartfelt thanks, and then took her leave.

For some time afterward she could take no rest, no food, think of nothing in the world save her father. She felt eager to see Colin, and

inform him of what had occurred, but found it impossible to do so until some few days after, when she took the opportunity afforded by a Sunday afternoon to hasten over to Whinmoor.

As she passed down the fields, she felt fearful of again encountering Miss Sowersoft, and tried to plan several little ways for seeing Colin unknown to her. In the midst of her reveries she suddenly beheld old George sauntering along the hedge-side, with his hands on his back, and a bit of a hawthorn blossom stuck in the button-hole of his coat. To him Fanny applied; and as the old man most readily undertook to execute her wishes, she waited in the fields until he sent Colin out to meet her. Together, then, they slowly traversed the fields, while Fanny detailed her extraordinary story, and listened with additional wonder to that which the youth in turn related respecting his adventure at Kiddal Hall, and the great assistance which, in consequence, the squire had promised to afford him. This mightily revived Fanny's hopes; for in the person of Mr. Lupton she fancied she now saw one who would aid in the liberation of her father.

But Colin somewhat clouded these fair visions when, after some thought, he told her that, as, in consequence of Mr. Lupton being from home so long, it would be impossible to communicate the matter to him, he would not wait until the time was passed, and leave her father in such a horrible place so much longer, but would try a plan of his own contrivance for effecting his liberation.

Having explained his scheme, and succeeded in quieting Fanny's distrust as to its execution, Colin bade her farewell, and promised to see her again in a few days.

CHAPTER X.

Plot and counter-plot. The difference between two sides of the same question curiously illustrated.

As Mrs. Rowel very strictly kept her word with Fanny, and contrived to evade telling the doctor any portion of the discovery that had been made, that gentleman remained in the happy belief that his project to convince his niece of the deceased lawyer's falsehood had entirely succeeded. James Woodruff was therefore allowed to spend the day out of his cell, as usual.

Early one morning, shortly after the interview between himself and his daughter already recorded, he was pacing mechanically up and down the yard, revolving in his agitated and confused mind the inexplicable doubts attending all that had recently occurred, when he was momentarily startled from his reverie by observing something white skim above the wall, making a seeming pause in the air, and then fall to the ground within his enclosure. Woodruff advanced toward it, and beheld a piece of paper folded up like a letter. He eagerly stooped to pick it up; but his arms were bound in that accursed ligature, which made him more helpless than a child. He threw himself wildly on the ground, and gathered it up with his mouth; still he had no hands to open it. He looked angrily round, but could not discover anything that might aid him. He placed it between his knees; the attempt failed, and the little packet dropped again to the ground. Again he gathered it up, and rose to his feet; he placed it against the wall, and with tongue and lips contrived

after much troubled to force it open. Again he sat on the ground, placed it on his knee, and read as follows :—

"The young woman who came to see you is your own daughter, Frances Woodruff. Be of good heart, as she is making all possible exertions to liberate you. In order to effect this, it is necessary that you contrive some pretext for staying out in your yard until ten o'clock at night, or later, on the third night after this. If you should not succeed, then try each night afterward successively until you do succeed. You will then see a head over the north-east corner of the wall of the yard where the yew-tree stands, and opposite the thickest part of the east plantation. Wait in the corner beneath, and a rope-ladder will be let down, by which you can climb to the top and escape. This is written by your daughter's friend, Colin Clink, who will do his best to get you out; so do not be afraid of being betrayed.

"Fanny has seen this and she prays God night and day that you will be able to agree to it. Do not be afraid, as Colin is sure to come (happen what may, short of death) at the time appointed. The third night, mind—or any night after, at ten o'clock."

Poor James could scarcely believe his eyes. He almost doubted at first whether he was not at length really growing insane, and whether the circumstances which he fancied had so recently occurred were not mental delusions, consequent on his burning desire to be at liberty. Could it indeed be possible that the glorious hour was so near at hand?—that his daughter was alive?—that he had seen her—a beautiful young woman like what his own wife was when first he took her to his home;—that she was aiding him once more to tread the earth free?—that he might again have a home—be revenged on the man who so cruelly wronged him—and, once more reinstated in his house at Charnwood, enjoy that greatest of all earthly blessings, a father's pride in the beauty, the virtue, and the heroism of his child?

These thoughts were almost more than he could bear, and he wept aloud, as he mentally offered up a prayer of gratitude to Heaven for all its goodness to him.

Afterward, in order to prevent the possibility of any discovery, he tore up the letter into the most minute fragments with his teeth, and buried them in a hole which he made with his foot, near the trunk of the old yew-tree. Nevertheless he was not safe. There were enemies without, of whom he knew nothing, and treachery was at work to undermine Colin's project.

It was stated some few pages back that Fanny and Colin were sauntering in the fields on the old farm, at Whinmoor, when the former related her discoveries at Nabbfield, and the latter explained to her the plan he had formed for assisting her father to escape. Now, at the time when he was earnestly engaged in doing this, Miss Maria Sowersoft was standing behind an adjacent hedge, having stealthily crept there with her shoes off, in order to gratify a certain irrepressible curiosity to know what object Fanny could have in coming so far to see Colin, old George having announced her arrival. Although Colin frequently, and very fortunately, spoke in too low a voice for Miss Sowersoft to catch the meaning of the projected attempt, and also mentioned so few of the details of his plan, that she could scarcely make head or tail of it; yet so much reached her attentive ear as sufficed to form in her mind the

ground-work of some very horrible suspicions of Colin's honesty. The great fertility of her genius in matters of this description soon enabled her to make out, from the broken discourse she had heard, that Colin was no better than a thief, and that he actually meditated committing a burglary upon the premises of Dr. Rowel some night in the course of the ensuing week; while Fanny was doing neither more nor less than aiding and abetting him in his nefarious attempt. But as her information was not of a sufficiently positive kind to justify her in acquainting the constable, and getting him immediately apprehended, she came to the conclusion that Dr. Rowel ought at least to be put upon his guard, in order that he might station proper watchmen in his neighbourhood to seize the culprit whenever he might make his appearance. This matter also afforded such an excellent opportunity for her to revenge herself upon Fanny for what she had formerly said before the doctor's face, on the occasion of Colin's illness, that she could not think by any means of allowing it to slip by. Accordingly, some time before the night arrived which Colin had appointed for his trial, the amiable Miss Sowersoft might have been seen marching with important step up the gardens of the doctor's establishment, with the serious and great intention of communicating to that gentleman in person some hints of the imminent danger that threatened his property.

On her introduction to him, she announced the object of her visit in the following manner:

"It is a most unpleasant thing to me, Dr. Rowel, to have to call upon you on such a case of secrecy as the present. . You are aware, doctor, that I have a boy about me over at the farm—"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the doctor, "I know him well. Palethorpe, you mean."

"Oh no, sir!—oh no!—not him—by no means. He is a middle-aged man, and a very honest one too. No, no. I mean the boy that you attended a while ago—Colin Clink. That boy, sir, I am sorry to say, is as vicious and bad a character as ever crossed a threshold. I am sure if he escapes the gallows at last, it will only be because he was born to be drowned. He has been hatching mischief of one sort or another every day since he came into the world, and now he has got to such a pitch—"

Here Miss Sowersoft bent her head toward the doctor, and whispered during the space of ten minutes, in so low a voice that nobody save the doctor himself could catch a word of what was said.

"Miss Sowersoft, you amaze me!" exclaimed the doctor.

"I assure you, doctor," she reiterated, "I believe every word I have said is as true as that you sit there."

The doctor thanked Miss Sowersoft for her information, assured her two or three times over that he would make the best use of it, and very politely ended the conference by wishing her good morning.

Never, I verily believe, did any mischief-maker on the face of this pleasant earth feel a greater degree of self-satisfaction than did Miss Sowersoft, as she returned to Whinmoor. What revenge should she not take, when Colin was caught in the very fact of housebreaking, and when Fanny could be immediately involved in the same crime! The thought was so inspiring, that she tripped along with a degree of briskness which would have induced any one who did not see her face to believe her at least twenty years the junior of herself.

CHAPTER XI.

Colin prepares for his undertaking, and exhibits great stubbornness of temper in withstanding many difficulties.

FROM the time at which James Woodruff had received the little packet, as related some pages back, up to the eventful night when, as mentioned therein, the attempt to extricate him from confinement was to be made, Colin had busily employed all his spare hours in manufacturing in secret such articles for his purpose as he conceived he should require. This he was the better enabled to do, from having accompanied Fanny on a visit of inspection to the place, when, by the top of the old yew-tree being visible above the high wall, she was enabled to point out to him the exact spot in which her father was confined, and where his attempt must necessarily be made.

On the afternoon preceding the appointed night, Colin asked for leave to go to Bramleigh on particular business ; and at the same time stated, that as it might detain him rather late, he should very probably have to remain there all night. Much to his surprise, Miss Soversoft immediately granted his request with a more than ordinary grace ; at the same time remarking very pleasantly, "that if his business there was but honest and good, she hoped he would succeed in it, as everybody ought to do ; but if people went about unprincipled jobs of any kind, it was very right and just that the evil spirit they served should betray them in the end."

At any other time Colin might not have noticed these remarks ; but under present circumstances, they sunk deep into his mind. He feared that his design had, by some means or other, become, if not wholly known, at least suspected ; and during the next half hour, instead of setting out, he sat down upon the step of the open house-door, considering what course he ought to pursue. The doubts which then arose in his mind were not so much the result of fear as of cautious forecast, touching the probable result of his enterprise. If by any means it had been found out, his wisest course would be to abandon it for the present, and either wait some more favourable opportunity, or leave the whole matter in abeyance until his visit to the hall, on the squire's return, afforded him a chance of explaining the circumstances to that gentleman, and of gaining, if possible, his assistance. Yet, if he did so, what would Mr. Woodruff think ? He would wait in horrible anxiety hour after hour, still depending upon the word of him, who said that nothing short of death should prevent his coming.

These reflections decided the question. Colin rose up, and within ten minutes was some distance on his road.

Another circumstance disturbed him. Before leaving the house, he saw Mr. Palethorpe, with his best inexpressibles on, preparing himself apparently for a short journey ; and, on Colin's putting the question to him, he observed, with a malicious grin, that *he* also was going to Bramleigh. The youth turned pale, and red, and pale again, as shame and fear alternately possessed his bosom, though he pursued his way with undiminished resolution, conscious that he had engaged in a good cause, and resolved rather to fail in it than to commit himself in falsehood, through the foolish dread of some undefined and perhaps imaginary danger.

Colin arrived at his mother's house about six o'clock in the evening, and, by previous appointment, met there with his friend Fanny. Together they put everything into a state of preparation; while Colin, as a precautionary measure, in case anything should happen, obliged the young woman to take three guineas of the fifteen which Mr. Lupton had sent him, and the whole of which he had brought in his pocket, in case it should be required for the service of Mr. Woodruff, when he had got out of the mad-house.

As hour after hour passed by, the young couple grew indescribably anxious and restless. Fanny dreaded that some unforeseen evil would befall Colin, and with tears in her eyes now begged him to give up the design, and wait until the squire's return enabled them to do so much more, and better. To this he replied in few words, that what he had promised to do he would do, happen what might.

"Then," said Fanny, "let us tell your mother all about it. I dare say she means the best for both of us, after all; and then, perhaps, she may think of something to help you in the attempt."

Mrs. Clink was accordingly informed, very much to her amazement, of the principal heads of this affair, so far as already known to the reader, and also of the business which, in consequence, Colin now had upon his hands. This last she considered highly chimerical and dangerous; she prophesied it would lead to nothing but trouble to himself; declared positively that twenty better methods could readily be devised; and concluded by assuring her son, that if he did not relinquish it at once and for ever, he would surely live to repent it before another week was over his head. Colin's reply again was, that no representations whatever could induce him to alter his purpose; and he began to get ready, and tie up his simple apparatus for climbing the wall.

At half-past nine o'clock he was ready to set out. Somehow, he knew not why, Colin felt that he must bid his mother and Fanny a more serious adieu than usual. His mother kissed him, and Fanny—she, when in the shadow of the door, kissed him too, and asked a thousand blessings on his head. He promised, in case he succeeded, to be back with Mr. Woodruff in the course of an hour and a half; and having again shaken hands with Fanny, he passed out into the street.

That hour and a half passed heavily by, during which Mrs. Clink and Fanny talked the matter over again, reflected, speculated, hoped, and feared. Colin did not come.

Eleven o'clock struck—he was not there; they looked out, but could see nothing; listened, but could hear nothing.

Twelve came—midnight—he did not return. Fanny could not be restrained by Mrs. Clink any longer, and she went up alone to the scene of his enterprise, trusting there at least to ascertain something. All was silent as the grave. One solitary light alone, as of some one retiring to quiet rest, was visible in the mad-house, and that was all. But while she stood, she heard a horseman enter the stony yard, as though he had come from the Whinmoor road. The light of a lantern glanced along the walls above, and then vanished in the stables. She hastened, terrified, back again—Colin was not there. The whole night passed—morning broke—the world grew light and gay—but he did not come again.

CHAPTER XII.

Colin's attempt to liberate Fanny's father from the mad-house, with the adventures that befel him thereupon.

WHEN our hero had taken leave of his friends, and passed out of his mother's house, he found the night, as he thought, peculiarly adapted for his purpose. The air was dark and troubled, vexed with contending winds, which blew, as it seemed, now from one quarter of the heavens, and then again from its opposite, while drops of rain occasionally came on the blast, succeeded by momentary showers of hard hail. Though summer-time, the weather felt as though it had suddenly changed to that of March, so cold and ungenial was the blast.

The youth pursued his way for some distance along a dark lane, fenced high with thick hawthorn on each side, and traversed by deep ruts, here and there containing puddles of water, which reflected some little light as they caught the sky, and deceived him with the idea that something white was lying in his road. From this lane he crossed a stile and several fields, as offering the most direct route to the back part of the grounds around the doctor's house. When arrived there, he stopped outside the plantation, in order to assure himself that no person was about. Nothing living stirred at that hour. He forced his way through a thorny gap in the fence, and soon found himself at that north-east corner of the yard-wall which he had particularly specified. He now uncoiled his rope, and cautiously threw up that end of it to which a grappling-hook was attached. After a few efforts it caught firm hold, and as the distant clock struck ten, he ascended to the top of the wall; though, as he fancied this elevation would bring him in relief against the sky, he crouched as closely as possible, in order to avoid being seen, should it unluckily so chance that any individual of the establishment was about.

"Are you there?" asked Colin, in a low but earnest voice, as he peeped down into the yard.

"Yes," answered one from below, in a similar tone. "All right. Make haste!"

Colin's heart leaped within him for joy. Now was he well rewarded for all his pain and trouble; to think that he had succeeded at last, notwithstanding all his mother's and Fanny's fears! Hastily he drew up the hempen ladder after him, and, sitting upon the top of the wall, fixed it on the other side, in order to enable James Woodruff to ascend.

"Put your feet in, and hold by the sides," said Colin, as he saw dimly that the figure was coming up.

"Yes, yes," replied he. "Stop there till I get safe to the top."

And in the next minute, when the body was half above the wall, Colin received a heavy blow on the head from a short bludgeon, accompanied by a fierce exclamation and an oath, that if he did not surrender that instant his brains should be blown out! Regardless of the height of the wall, he instantly dropped, and, though half stunned, and sprained in the leg besides, he endeavoured to make off. The fellow who, it was now evident, had been stationed in the yard on purpose to draw him into this trap—poor Woodruff had kept in his cell—was afraid to risk his limbs or his neck by following Colin's example; but, instead of



so doing, he began to bawl lustily for assistance. Colin heard two blunderbusses fired, and afterward the crash of pursuers through the plantations behind him. Conscious that the injury he had received from the fall would prevent him from escaping them by flight, he raised himself up against a gate-post, with his arms close against his sides. In this situation he had the pleasure, two minutes afterward, of both hearing and seeing a couple of stout fellows rush past within a yard of him, one of whom, by his voice and language, Colin recognized to be Mr. Palethorpe. Within a short period, having "lost scent," they returned, and lingered a few moments about the gate, as though irresolute which way to take. During this brief interval he plainly overheard the following conversation.

"Dang him, I wish we'd hit him ! It would have saved us all this trouble."

"Ay, ay, and hit him I will," replied Palethorpe, "if I can once get sight of him. Meesis was quite right, you see, in what she overheard him say—a young vagabone ! She told me afore I came out, if I *did* get a shot at him, to pepper him well ; and so I will. If we kill him in trespass and burglary, I think the law will stand at our backs. Dang him !—we lost sound of him somewhere here about, and I should not wonder if he's crept under some of these bushes. I'll fire in, and chance it."

No sooner said than done. Off went the blunderbuss into the thick underwood, for the moment making the spot whereon they stood as light as day, and illuminating Colin's figure as brilliantly as though he had stood beneath the flaring light of a gas-burner. Luckily the two men stood with their backs toward him, or he must inevitably have been detected. The report over, they listened ; but a few frightened birds, blindly flapping their wings among the trees, were all that could be heard. Palethorpe loaded again, and then made a proposal, which was agreed to by his companion, that they should make a circuit of the plantation, and then got on to the road.

The opportunity thus afforded to Colin was made the best use of by him, and he endeavoured to steal off in the direction of his mother's house. But, when he had cleared the plantation fence, he again heard his pursuers beating about in the road between him and that place, so that he deemed it most advisable to take the direction of Whinmoor. In that direction the coast seemed clear ; and, accordingly, keeping closely under the darkness of the hedge-side, he set off at his best speed. For the period of three-quarters of an hour or more he pursued his way unobstructed ; and as at the expiration of that time he had reached the Leeds and York highway, about a mile beyond which the old farm was situated, he began to congratulate himself upon his escape. Here he slackened his pace in order to recover breath and strength, both of which were well-nigh exhausted by his previous exertion.

As he rose to the top of a gentle hill, which the highway crossed, the sound of a horse's hoofs upon the hard road, though at a considerable distance, struck his ear. It came from the direction in which he had come and seemed to be getting nearer. Was it any one pursuing him ? His fears told him it must be so. Instead therefore of pursuing the road any farther, he leaped the fence, and hurried by a shorter cut over the fields in the direction of Miss Sowersoft's house. As he advanced the

gusty wind again and again brought along with it the sound of violent galloping. It was gaining rapidly upon him: but he was now nearer the house, and the horseman, if destined to the same place, would, he knew, be obliged to keep the beaten road, which would take him nearly a mile farther than that which Colin himself had taken. As he crept quietly into the farm-yard he perceived a light in one of the lofts. The door was opened, and a wagon stood beneath. Abel and old George were loading it with hay, for the purpose of sending it during the night to York, in order to be in that city sufficiently early on the following morning. There was no time to lose: and to stay at the farm to be taken prisoner would be quite as bad as though he had allowed himself to be taken at first. He therefore walked boldly up, and briefly told them that while he was at Bramleigh a plot had been laid by Palethorpe to entrap him; that he had threatened to shoot him if he could catch him; that it was with the greatest difficulty he had escaped; and that even now he believed they had sent some one on horseback to pursue him.

All this being to their own knowledge pretty characteristic of the aforesaid Palethorpe, they did not hesitate in agreeing to Colin's proposal that he should get into the wagon, have the hay-trusses piled around and over him, so as not to exclude the air, and in this manner to convey him to York. In order to bind them the more strongly to their promises of strict silence and secrecy, Colin gave Abel one of his guineas, to be afterward divided between the two. He then jumped into the wagon, and in a few minutes was very effectually put out of sight. In a few minutes afterward a horseman dashed into the yard, and demanded of them whether Colin Clink had come home. Abel denied that he was under any roof there; and, after undergoing a strong test of his powers of equivocation, contrived, very much to Colin's satisfaction, to persuade the pursuer to go home again.

Some time afterward the horses were tackled on, the wagon began to move, and a tedious journey of more than six hours' duration brought them within the old walled city of York, at about seven o'clock in the morning.

Having deposited his wagon in the market-place, Abel now invited Colin, who had made his way out of the vehicle when some two miles off the city, to accompany him to a public-house. This request the lad complied with; and, while making his breakfast, obtained ink and paper from the landlord, and wrote a short letter to his mother, and another to Fanny, explaining the circumstances which had led to his absence and flight, and promising to write again as soon as he had resolved in what place he should settle for the present, as he did not consider it safe to remain permanently, even at the distance he then was. These he gave in charge to Abel, who vowed to deliver them both safe and speedily. He then inquired of Colin whether he did not intend to go back again?

"Not till I know that everything is safe," replied the youth, "or else it would have been useless to come here."

"Then what do you intend to do? or where dost t' mean going?" again asked the man.

"I am quite undecided yet," remarked Colin; "but I shall find out a place somewhere, depend upon it."

"Well, lad," said Abel, "if I could do aught for thee, I would; but I mean leaving our missis's myself as soon as I can. I'll either list, or go to Lannun very soon, for it's beggarly work here."

The thought struck Colin—should *he* go to London? He had money, very luckily, sufficient to keep him awhile; and so far off he would be safe enough. When there, as he dared not return to Bramleigh to pay his promised visit to Kiddal Hall, he could write to the squire, and tell him what had happened, which would do quite as well; and doubtless enable him, with Mr. Lupton's assistance, not only very shortly to triumph over his persecutors, but also possessed of sufficient power to effect successfully that great object, the attempt to achieve which had so unexpectedly led to his present unpleasant situation.

He finally took his leave of Abel in the market-place, and then rambled alone and thoughtfully about the town, until within an hour or two of mid-day.

CHAPTER XIII.

Country notions of London.—A night-journey to the Metropolis, and Colin's arrival there.

THE good people of the Great City possess but a slight idea of the light in which they and the modern Babylon are regarded by the remote and rustic natives of the provinces. Colin partook largely of the general sentiment respecting that wonderful place, and its, in many respects, scarcely less marvellous people. To him, in common with every other child of village or hamlet, however remote, the name of London had been familiar almost from the cradle. He knew not the time when he knew it first; and the idea presented by it was that of some great, undefined, and unknown place, which had no equal in the world nor resemblance—(save in that it was composed of buildings and endless streets,)—to anything he had ever seen. It was a vast spectre, without shape, and measureless, looming in the misty atmosphere of a doubtful mind, like the ideal pictures of cities and the wonderful palaces of gnomes and genii, after reading some marvellous Arabian tale. Then, with the rustic inhabitants of every remote place, anything uncommon or superior is always presumed to have come from London; and to say that it came thence, is at once to confer upon it a higher ideal value. Many a worthless trinket brought by some wandering pedlar is purchased, and afterward miraculously preserved from juvenile spoliation amid the wreck of all other toys, merely because it came from London. The very appearance in a village of an individual of more than usual gentility, startling the bumpkins with a "sight" on some fine summer's morning, is of itself taken as presumptive evidence that he very probably came from London. Any innovation or improvement in dress or manners, is promptly and naturally supposed to have had its origin in London. London is the place, in short, where everything is great—where everything of the best is made—where all the first people of the world do congregate—where it is very needful to look sharp about you lest your very eyes get picked out without your knowing it until they are gone—where the most cunning thieves are always at your elbow—where everything worth seeing is to be seen, and worth hearing to be heard—where anybody may chance to succeed, though he could succeed nowhere else—and where, finally, for some one or other or all of these causes, every man, woman, girl, and boy express a wish to go before they die.

Thus is London generally regarded by the rural people of the provinces;

and thus was it in degree that Colin thought, as he paced about the quiet streets of York. What to do when he should get there he did not know ; but go somewhere he must. There was still room left for many more in London than himself. Accordingly he walked into a coach-office, and, after making some inquiries, took his place by a coach, which, though it travelled an indirect route, had the advantage of being about to start in half an hour. That interval he employed in writing another letter home, expressive of the intention he had just formed, and stating that he should write again as soon as he arrived in London.

The public vehicle being now nearly ready, Colin climbed awkwardly up and took his seat ; and after all the important preparations incident to such an occasion had been duly made, an expert hostler ingeniously twitched off the horses' coverings as they were starting, and within a short time Colin was whirled away on this his first day of foreign travel.

Never having been on a public stage before, our hero felt delighted. The pleasant and rapid motion, and the continual change of scenery, almost made him wonder why those people who could afford it did not ride on the top of a public coach every day of their lives. Village, town, and then long spaces of cultivated fields alternately came on the horizon, and were left behind ; foot-passengers by the road-side appeared to him almost at a stand-still, and the speed of such irritable curs as barked and ran after the horses, little greater than that of a mole. Toward evening, however, these things lost much of their attraction, and he began to grow weary. With weariness came despondency, and he almost felt as though he were lost.

The sun went down somewhere in the direction of the home he had left last night. What were his mother and Fanny doing now ? What doubt were they not in, and what misery enduring through his (to them) unaccountable absence ! It was evident enough, too, that Palethorpe knew him—and that his design had been found out. What evil reports would they not spread concerning him to the dismay and shame of Fanny and his mother ! Mr. Lupton, also, might hear them, and perhaps refuse to take any notice of his letters ; though he himself, were he there, could explain all this to everybody's satisfaction. Tears both of sorrow and vexation swam in his eyes, and he wished it was but possible the coachman could drive him back again. Night came on, and at a great town (Leicester, I believe) two flaring lamps were put up, which cast upon the ground a sharp light on either side, as though they flew with a pair of fiery wings. Passers-by, tree-trunks, and mile-stones shot out of the darkness before, and into that behind, almost before they could be seen ; while occasionally might be observed other bright rayless lights, glancing through the hedges, or staring boldly down the road before them, like the eyes of a monstrous dragon. Then came the rattle of another coach, a shout of recognition between the coachmen, a tip upward of the whip, and all was dark again. The passengers were silent, and Colin grew doubly melancholy. The coachman now and then looked round at his fares, as much as to say he very much doubted whether he was driving a hearse or not ; yet all sat as quiet as corpses. He asked "the box" if he were cold ! The box said "No," and then turned up his coat collar and pretended to go to sleep. The coachman sung himself a song, and beat his whip-hand upon his left shoulder to keep the blood stirring. The guard shouted to him, and he shouted back again

—"the bag of corn was to be left at So-an-so, and old Joe was to see and send that harness back in the morning."

Colin took no interest in all this, so he shut his eyes, and, after awhile, fell asleep. The horn blowing for a change of horses, awoke him again. Again he went to sleep, and the same pleasing tune was played in his vexed ears, and on the same occasion, repeatedly during the night. When morning broke, he was chilled almost to death; his feet felt as though undergoing amputation: he could never have believed it was so cold in summer at any part of the twenty-four hours as he now found it. The night had been fine and dry, and daylight began with only a few thin clouds. He longed for a ray of the sun, and watched his increasing light with desire unfelt before. As he rose, however, the mists gathered thicker and thicker as it grew lighter. Then they swept like a storm over the hills in front, and filled the valleys with a damp fog as thick as any in November. At two or three hours after sunrise, all was clear again, and he basked delightfully in the burning heat. They now began to pass droves of sheep, and herds of cattle, hundreds together, and often recurring, yet all bending the same way as themselves; they were going to London to be devoured. None seemed to come back again. They ascended a steep hill; and to the right Colin saw the longest-bodied church, with the shortest tower he had ever seen in his life: it was St. Albans. Here a man of business, escaped from the metropolis the night before, and now fresh from sleep and breakfast, and with a "shining morning face," gave the coachman a familiar nod and word, and jumped up to return to his ledger. The stable-boys looked at Colin, and regarding him as a "green 'un," winked at each other, and smiled. The coachman took no notice of him, as being considerably beneath his observation. But Colin, without troubling himself concerning other people's thoughts of him, looked at the long signs about posting at so much per mile, and at those which advertised Messrs. Mangel Wursel and Co's Entire, and wondered what in the world they meant. Another hour or two passed, and the road seemed to our hero to be alive with all kinds of vehicles describable and nondescript. Dog-horses drawing lumbering old coaches, and dog-carts filled with country-baked bread, intermingled with spring vehicles carrying soda-water, and carriers' carts laden with crockery, were jumbled together in all the glorious confusion and dust of a dry summer morning. Occasionally some butcher's boy, without his hat, would drive from among them, as though his very life depended on his speed, and shoot ahead, until, in character with all of his fraternity, he outstripped everybody; and after the fashion of the good deities of the Heathen mythology, vanished in a cloud of his own raising.

The coach approached a high archway in the road. Through it Colin saw what he took to be a mass of horizontal cloud; and peering above it in solitary grandeur, like one lone rock above a wilderness of ocean, the dome of a great cathedral. To the left, on descending the hill, stood what he took to be a palace; and still farther on, in Holloway, and Islington, so many things of a totally new character presented themselves to him, that he scarcely believed himself in the same world as he was yesterday. The turnpikes, and the Angel Inn, the coaches and the cabs, the rabble and noise, the screaming of hawkers, the causeways lined with apple-women and flower-girls, the running and scrambling of

men carrying bundles of newspapers, as they bawled to the passengers of outward-bound stages, "*Times, sir!—Chronicle—Morning Post!*" the swearing of coachmen, the thrashing of drovers, the barking of dogs, and the running of frightened sheep and over-goaded cattle, formed altogether such as a Babel, as made him for the time utterly forget himself.

"City, young man, or get down here?" demanded the coachman.

"Where are we?" asked Colin.

"Islington. Where are you going to?"

"London," replied Colin.

"I say, Jim," remarked the coachman to his friend the guard, "that's a neatish cove, now, isn't he, to come here?"

"Wot do I care, d— his eyes! Pick up that basket, and go on, without you mean to stop here all day!"

Whereupon the driver folded up his waybill, and elbowed his passage through a crowd of miserable, perishing, be-coated and be-capped night-travellers, who blocked up the causeway with trunks, carpet-bags, and hat-boxes. Their palid visages and heavy eyes, indeed, conveyed to the spectator no indifferent idea of so many unfortunate ghosts just landed on the far side of the Styx.

"So you are for London, young 'un, are you?" asked the coachman, when again on his seat.

"Yes, sir," replied Colin, "and I suppose we are not far from it now?"

"Jim!" shouted the coachman, as he leaned half round to catch a glimpse of the guard, "this chap wants to know how far he is from London, if you can tell him!" And this humorous remark he rounded off with a weasing chuckle, that appeared to have its origin in a region far below the thick superstratum of coat and shawl with which the coachman himself was covered. He then deliberately eyed Colin from head to foot several times, with a look of great self-satisfaction, and again inquired—

"Wot did your mother send you from home fer?"

"Nobody sent me," said Colin; "I came of my own accord."

"Wot, you're going i' sarvis, then? or, have you come up to get made Lord Mayor?"

Our hero had felt sufficiently his own loneliness before; but this last observation made him feel it doubly. He coloured deeply.

"Come, I didn't mean that," said the driver; "it was only a joke to raise your spirits. I don't want to spile your feelin's, young man."

"I assure you, sir," replied Colin, with emotion, "I have no place to go to, and I do not know a single soul in London. When I get off this coach, I shall not know where to turn, nor what to do!"

"Then wot did you come for?" inquired the coachman.

"To get a place," said our hero.

"And you don't know where to put up?"

"No."

"Humph! Well, m'happen I can tell you. How much money have you got?"

Colin satisfied the inquirer on this particular; and in return received the coachman's promise to direct him to a respectable house, at which he might put up until he had done one of two things, either obtained a situation, or "got himself cleaned out."

CHAPTER XIV.

The "Yorkshire House."—Its Company.—And an adventure.

IN the course of some subsequent conversation, Colin's friend the coachman ascertained that his "green" passenger came from some place in the county of York, and instantaneously concluded, by a peculiar process of reasoning, that our hero ought of necessity to put up at a "Yorkshire House." He forthwith recommended him to a tavern of some notoriety in the city, backing his recommendation with the assurance that, as he was but raw in London, it would be better for him to be among his own countrymen.

In the "Yorkshire House," then, we will suppose him. His first business, after having refreshed himself, was to call for ink and paper, and indite an epistle to Squire Lupton, giving him not only an explicit statement of the cause of his precipitate retreat from Bramleigh, and his consequent inability to attend at the hall on the appointed day, but also detailing the horrible scene of the lawyer's confession respecting the situation of James Woodruff, which had led to his recent attempt and compelled that retreat. This being done, and duly despatched, he hastily prepared himself, seivered and confused in brain as he was by the long night-journey, to take a turn in the streets. He longed, as every stranger does who first enters this mighty city, to wander among its endless maze of houses, and witness the vastness of its resources. He passed down one of the by-streets in Cheapside; wondered at the numbers of caravans and carts, the coaches and cabs, which blocked themselves to a temporary stand-still in the streets branching from either side; marvelled what all the vehicles that shot along could be employed for; where the contrary and cross currents of human beings could all possibly be setting in; or how the enormous evidences of almost inconceivable wealth, displayed on all sides, could ever have been thus accumulated. As he ruminated, the crowd every now and then half spun him round, now one way, now another, in the endeavour to pass or to outstrip him. Some belated clerk, hurrying to his duty, put a forcible but offensive hand upon his shoulder, and pushed him aside; the butcher's boy (and butchers' boys are always in a hurry) perhaps poked the projecting corner of his wooden tray or the shank of a leg of mutton into his ear; the baker drove a loaf into his ribs; the porter knocked his hat off with the box on his knot; the merchant pushed it into the gutter, in order to avoid treading upon it, and the policeman, standing front outward by the lamp-post, smiled as sedately as a wooden doll, whose lower jaw is pulled down with a string, and, when advice was useless, kindly told him to "take care of his hat."

By the time he had passed through Fleet-street, and round along Oxford-street, and Holborn, his head was in a whirl. In the course of a few short hours his senses had received more numerous and striking impressions than had been made upon them probably during the whole course of his previous life. London seemed a Babel, and himself one of those who were lost utterly in the confusion of tongues—tongues not of men merely, but of iron and adamant, rattling together their horrible jargon, until his ears sounded and reverberated like two shells beside him.

head, and his brain became bewildered as if with (that which he had happily never yet experienced) a night's excess.

About seven o'clock in the evening he returned to his inn. Having placed himself quietly in a retired corner of the parlour of the "Yorkshire House," and immediately beneath a sloping skylight extending the whole breadth of the room—a position which very strongly suggested the idea that he was sitting under a cucumber-frame, Colin amused himself by making silent remarks upon the scene before him. Sundry very miscellaneous-looking personages formed the principal figures of the picture, and were relieved by numerous accessories of mutton-chops, biscuits, broiled kidneys, pints of stout, and glasses of gin-punch; the whole being enveloped in an atmosphere of such dense smoke, as gave a very shadowy and mysterious character to every object seen through it.

"There's a fly on your nose, Mr. Prince," remarked a lean hungry-looking fellow; "a blue-bottle, sir, just on the end there."

The individual thus addressed was a sinister-looking man, who, it afterward appeared, was a native of Leeds, in which he had formerly carried on business, and contrived to scrape together a large fortune. In mercantile phraseology, he was a "thirty thousand pound man;" and, though as ignorant and surly a brute as ever went on two legs, on account of his property he was looked up to and respected by everybody as ignorant as himself. On hearing his friend Hobson's remark, Mr. Prince suddenly seized the end of his own nose, and grasped it in his hand, as he was in the regular habit of doing whenever the fly was mentioned, while, with a very shallow assumption of facetiousness, he replied, "Then I've got him to-night, by go!"

Every individual in the company who knew his business properly now forced a laugh at the great man's witty method of doing things, while Hobson replied,

"I think not, Mr. Prince. He's too 'fly' for you again."

"Look in your hand, Mr. Prince," suggested a thick-headed fellow, from the East-Riding, not unlike a bullock in top-boots. Mr. Prince thanked him for the hint; but declined adopting it, on the score that if he opened his hand he should lose him.

"Put him in Hobson's glass," said another.

"Well," replied Hobson, "as we all know Mr. Prince is very poor, I'll give him sixpence if he will."

This hint at Mr. Prince's poverty was exceedingly relished both by the Prince himself and all the toad-eaters about him. Its ingenuity seemed to delight them, as did also the reply made by the great man himself.

"I doubt whether you ever had a sixpence to spare in your life."

Another mechanical laugh was here put in at Hobson's expense, which that gentleman not relishing quite so well as he would have done had the insinuation been made at the expense of any other person, he repelled it by challenging Mr. Prince to produce, there and then, as many sovereigns upon the table as any other man in the company. This touched Mr. Prince in a delicate place, and he growled out, with a horrible oath, that he could buy Hobson and all his family up with only the simple interest of his capital. At the same time he put his hand in his breeches-pocket, and drew forth a broad-bellied greasy black pocket-book, which he slapped heavily on the table as he swore there was more money in it than Hobson had ever even so much as seen together before. Hobson flaily

denied it, and offered to bet glasses round that it did not contain twenty pounds more than his own.

"Done!" roared Mr. Prince, as his clenched fist fell on the table, with a weight which made all the pipes and glasses upon it dance a momentary hornpipe. A comparison of pocket-books was immediately instituted. Mr. Prince's was declared to contain one hundred and seventy bank-notes more than Hobson's, and Hobson was called upon for the grog. This being more than he expected, he endeavoured to evade the bet altogether, by insinuating that he should not believe Mr. Prince's notes were good, unless he looked at them himself. Several voices cried together "No, no!" and the rest vented their opinions in loud exclamations of "Shame, shame!—Too bad!"—and the like.

Mr. Prince felt the indignity offered to his pocket-book most keenly. He looked unutterable things at Hobson, and bellowed loud enough to have been heard as far as Lad Lane, that "he would see him in"—(a very uncomfortable place, I can assure the reader, according to all accounts)—"before he would trust a single farthing of his money in the hands of such a needy, starving, pennyless bankrupt as he was." Many of those present felt that this language was not exactly warrantable; but there were no cries of shame in favour of Mr. Hobson.

At this interesting period of the discussion, Colin's eyes chanced to be fixed very earnestly on the countenance of Mr. Prince, which that gentleman remarking, he forthwith turned suddenly on the young man with this abrupt demand:—

"What are *you* staring at, eh? Did you never see a man's face before."

"Yes," very quietly replied Colin; "I have seen many *men's* faces before."

"What do you mean by that, eh?" cried Prince. "What does he mean?" addressing the company. "Come—come, young man, I'll soon teach you how to know your betters." And he strode toward Colin, with the apparent intention of practically illustrating the system he maintained. The latter instantly rose on his feet to meet the foe. All eyes were now turned toward these two, while the squabble with Hobson appeared for the time to be wholly forgotten.

"Beg my pardon, sir!" bellowed Prince.

"I shall beg no man's pardon whom I have neither injured nor insulted," coolly answered Colin.

"I say, beg my pardon!" repeated Prince. "Do you mean to take the law of me if I strike you? Say no, and I'll knock you down."

"No!" replied Colin, "I shall appeal to no law except that of my own force. If you strike me, I shall probably strike again, old as you are."

Smash went Mr. Prince's fist at Colin's face; but the latter parried the blow adroitly, and by a cool "counter" succeeded in pressing Mr. Prince's nose very much closer to his face than nature herself had intended it to be. Cries of "Shame!" again arose against Colin; and some attempts were made to seize and turn him out. These, however, were prevented by other portions of the company, who exclaimed loudly in favour of fair play, and against any interference. In the mean time Mr. Prince grew furious, and raised his stick to strike Colin with the determination of a butcher about to knock a bull on the head. The youth again parried the intended blow, and turned the weapon aside by receiving it

in a slanting direction on his right arm. In order to close with him on the opposite side, Prince now jumped on the table; but this manœuvre the young man avoided, and at the same instant a shower of broken glass fell upon him. Colin's enraged assailant's stick had gone through the lid of the "city cucumber-frame," and some half-dozen fractured squares attested his powers of mischief. A loud laugh echoed from every part of the room, which put Mr. Prince in a perfect whirlwind of passion. He plunged at his young opponent as though he meditated crushing him by the mere weight of his body; but as the coolness of the latter enabled him to take advantage of the slightest circumstance in his favour, he slipped aside at the critical moment, and his antagonist's head went with power of a paviour's rammer against the wall. This terminated the fight. Mr. Prince lay on the floor, and groaned with pain and vexation, until he was picked up, and placed, almost as inanimate as a sack of potatoes, in his chair.

In an instant afterward a gentleman, dressed in a dark-blue great-coat, and who, as Colin thought, was so very rich in that particular article of clothing as to lay himself under the necessity of having them numbered on the collar, made his appearance in the room; and at the instance of the landlord stepped forward, and collared our hero, with the intention of conveying him to the station-house. Against this proceeding several friendly individuals protested, and joined vehemently in the opinions expressed by a stout young Welshman, who sat with a pipe in his mouth, that "Py cot! it was to bad to meddle with him instead of the old one." This timely interference saved Colin for the present, and the policeman was obliged to retire.

Deeply fatigued as our hero was from previous want of rest, he early retired to his apartment, and soon fell into a slumber of many hours' duration. On rising in the morning, what was his astonishment to find a roll of paper like bank-notes lying near him, for the presence of which he knew not how to account?

After some hesitation he dressed, and rang for the servant.

"That roll of paper," said he, when she appeared, "lay on my chair when I woke. It was not there last night, and it does not belong to me. How it came there I know not. The papers appear to be bank-notes. You had better take them to your master, and inquire whether any person in the house has lost them."

The girl looked surprised; but took them up, and followed his advice.

Very soon after Colin heard a hue and cry raised below-stairs. A few minutes elapsed, and then a rush of people toward his room announced that the mystery of the roll of papers was about to be cleared.

"Is this him?" demanded a man, with a belt round his body, and a glazed rim on the edge of his hat-crown.

"That's him!" replied the servant-girl. "He gave them to me."

"Come, young man, I want you," said the policeman, seizing Colin roughly. "Come along with me." And, in spite of all his entreaties and protestations, he was hurried away. It appeared that Mr. Prince, who occupied a room on the same floor as his young antagonist, had identified the notes as his own, and declared that Colin must have robbed him.

After the lapse of a very short period, Colin stood before the grave magisterial authorities sitting at Guildhall, with Mr. Prince as his accuser. The charge having been heard, Colin replied to it with all the fearlessness

ness, determination, and indignation, which the consciousness of innocence is sure to inspire. He related the occurrences of the previous evening, and concluded by expressing his firm belief that the money had been placed upon his chair in order to bring him into trouble. When searched, ten sovereigns and some silver had been found upon him. He was asked to account for the possession of so much money! To this question he flatly refused to answer, as well as those bearing upon his own character and employment; who he was; where he came from; and what place he had left when he arrived at the Yorkshire House.

In this dilemma an idea struck the subtle brain of Mr. Prince. He felt now perfectly secure of his victim. *He* owned them also, and declared they were part of the money which had been abstracted during the night from his pocket-book. Here, however, he overstepped the mark. Colin instantly requested that the landlord of the inn might be called to witness that the money was in his possession at the time he arrived there, and many hours before it could even be pretended that he saw the individual who now stood forward as his accuser. To this fact the landlord honestly bore testimony—a piece of evidence which caused the face of Colin's accuser to assume the tint of a thundercloud with the sunshine on it—he looked black and white at the same time. Boots also declared that on going upstairs to leave the gentlemen's boots at their doors, he saw some person come out of the young man's room, who certainly bore very little resemblance to the occupant of that room himself. After some farther investigation Mr. Prince was accommodated with a reprimand from the bench, and the case was dismissed.

CHAPTER XV.

Colin makes an acquaintance, and is put in a way of being introduced to his sister, a "public singer."

THE temptations of the Yorkshire House were not sufficiently great to induce Master Clink to remain in it after the conclusion of the foregoing adventure. Having returned to discharge his shot, he bade good bye to the place altogether, and again betook himself to the streets, both with the idea of looking about him, and of seeking out another home. In the course of the afternoon he contrived to pick up an acquaintance at a small public house where he called, in the person of a tall, thin, laddish-looking young man, not unlike a pea-rod split half-way up: clad in a blue coat, partially out at elbows, and so short in the arms that his wrists and great red hands hung out full a quarter of a yard, like fly-flappers; while his trousers—an old-fashioned, striped, summer pair, value about one and threepence if ticketed—allowed his ankles to descend below them in no contemptible imitation of a pair of stilts. His countenance, which was nearly of the same hue as a sago pudding, strongly resembled in shape a boy's humming-top. From certain conversations which Colin had with him, it appeared that this miserable creature, whose name was Wintlebury, was but two-and-twenty years of age, and had been brought up as assistant to a poor painter of window-blinds, scenes for licensed concert-taverns, and such like, then resident in some obscure back street near the Commercial-Road. As his master was himself half-starved upon the productions of his genius, the lad, who came in but second, very naturally starved outright; and one night,

in the mere desperation of hunger, he fell upon two chops, which had been prepared for the family's supper, and devoured them. On the discovery of this atrocious act, he was turned out of the house at ten o'clock and left to wander about the streets. His only friend was his sister, who sang and performed some minor parts at the threepenny tavern converts, so numerous at the eastern end of the town; and whose finances, unfortunately, were not in a much better condition than his own. Sickness had ruined her: and she paid much more to keep herself alive, than her living ordinarily cost her. He therefore could not find in his heart to apply to her. That night he walked the streets till, tired and worn out, he sat down about two o'clock on the steps of Guildhall, and fell asleep. Here he was apprehended and lodged in the watch-house; taken to the police-office the next day, and committed to prison for sleeping in the air:—a sentence the term of which had expired but a short time before. Such was the brief story of the poor creature who now had made an acquaintance with Colin.

As our hero had yet a round sum left, and, as the day advanced, began to feel something like the want of a dinner, he adopted the advice of Wintlebury, and walked with him into one of those bay-windowed shops in which a display of greasy-looking hams, varnished pork-pies, and dry boiled-beef, is usually made; while a savoury steam ascends through the bars of the area-grate, as a sort of hint to the nose of the passer-by that in the region above he may make his dinner. Having regaled himself and his companion with an ample repast, Colin discharged the bill, and they wandered into the town. As neither of them knew where to put up at night, Wintlebury advised Colin, for economy's sake, to look out for a private lodging: and recommended him to apply at the identical house where his own sister lodged; as he thought the mistress most probably would have one sort of room or another unoccupied.

To this proposal our hero consented. They walked in the direction of Shoreditch, and did not halt until they arrived at the door of a house in the Mile End-Road.

"All right!" said Colin's companion—"there's a paper in the window."

Just as Wintlebury had ceased to agitate the knocker, Colin—whose eyes were downward—saw a dirty face popped close to the panes of the low kitchen window, with a pair of white eyes turned up to catch a glimpse of the applicants.

Mrs. Popple soon made her appearance; and having ascertained the object of the visit, proceeded to conduct them into the house. As the party ascended the stairs, Mrs. Popple informed Colin that he would find her upper room a most delightful retreat. He might there read his book in peace; or, if he were so disposed, might play his flute, violin, trombone, tambourine, or even drum, without fear of complaint from any of the other lodgers, who really agreed so well together, that it was almost like paradise itself to live in such a social community. The window of it also overlooked all the backs of the surrounding houses, while a skylight in front opened directly upon the heavens themselves. Colin replied, that he neither played on any musical instrument nor did he particularly admire such heavens as he had hitherto seen over London. He did not think the attic was likely to suit him. As he threw a careless eye around, he observed a black stump-bedstead, one decent

chair, and three rush-bottomed ditto; while in one corner stood an old oak chest, made, probably, in the early days of George the First, and large enough almost to be converted, if occasion required, into a family burying-place. On the white-washed walls were scratched with the artistical finger-nails of previous occupants various ill-proportioned figures.

Colin at length decided to become "the mornarch of all he surveyed" for the space of one week. In the mean time Wintlebury had taken the opportunity of seeing his sister, and had received two free orders from her for a concert at the Condor Tavern that evening.

CHAPTER XVI.

A peep at a Tavern Concert. Colin falls in love, parts with his money, and gets into difficulties.

THE entrance to the "saloön" of the Tavern where the Concert was to be held lay through a dram-shop. As Colin and his companion passed the bar, the latter familiarly recognized several shabby-genteel and dissipated-looking young men, who stood there drinking gin-and-water, and talking exquisite nonsense to a pretty-faced toy-like bar-maid, whose principal recommendation with her master consisted in the skill with which she contrived to lure and detain at the bar all such simpletons as usually spent the greater portion of their spare time amid such scenes. By the side of the passage, and near the door of the saloon, was pasted up a small paper, on which was the following announcement:

On Sundays, SIX PENCE. Value given.
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The "value given" consisted of about a dozen spoonful of either gin or rum, with very hot water, to make it appear strong—or of a pot of ale or stout, at the discretion of the customer.

Very much to Colin's astonishment—as well it might be, considering that he had never before seen aught of the kind more extensive than a country inn—he was suddenly ushered by his companion into a "saloön," containing about from three to five hundred persons, arranged on forms placed across the room, each form having before it a narrow raised ledge, not unlike those sometimes seen in the pews of churches, on which to lodge the respective pots, bottles, and glasses of the company. Down the avenues, which ran longitudinally, for the convenience of passage, certain individuals were calling shrimps, screwed up in conical white packages of one penny each; while the perfume, if such it could be called, from some scores of pipes and cigars, ascended in multitudinous little clouds above the heads of the company, and covered as with a filmy atmosphere the frescoed landscapes with which the walls above were bountifully decorated. At the remote end of the room appeared a stage and proscenium on a small scale, after the fashion of a minor theatre.

Shortly after Colin and his friend had taken their seats, a gentleman commenced playing an overture upon an instrument which had been highly admired there ever since its introduction, as it formed within itself a magnificent combination of organ, piano, clarinet, and bagpipe,

and possessed besides the additional advantage of occasionally producing tones at its own will and pleasure, to which those of no other instrument in the world might be compared, and of which no adequate conception can be formed, unless the reader has enjoyed the exquisite delight of hearing a "fantasia extempore" played on the hinges of some unoiled door, as it gradually, and in varying time, declined from a wide open position to the door-check.

As I have not the most distant intention of wearying either the reader or myself with a detailed description of the night's entertainment, I shall merely observe, that after the curtain drew up, a succession of songs, comic, patriotic, pathetic, and sniveletic, was introduced, and sung by various members of the professional company. Among these appeared one, on seeing whom Wintlebury exclaimed to his companion, "That's my sister!"

Colin looked. A beautiful-complexioned girl was on the stage—bright-eyed, lively, and attractively attired in the showy costume of a theatrical Neapolitan maid. After a brief prelude on the famous Orchestræolophonagpipe, she sung, apparently not without effort, but with the most bewitching assumption of modesty telling its troubles to the moon, a song, the burden of which ran "*Too many lovers will puzzle a maid!*"

"Encore!—encore!" enthusiastically cried a gentleman, who was sitting a few seats in advance, as he clapped his hands madly together, and tossed his legs at random under the seat before him, "admirable, bi'gar!—me quite consent vith dat. Too many is too much!"

"Hangcoor!" repeated a young sailor, considerably more than half-seas over, as he unconsciously re-charged his pipe, as though he were ramming down the wadding of a gun, "hangcoor!—Go it again, Bess, or whatever your name is. Hangcoor!"

This word, under a dozen different pronunciations, ran round the room, while Miss Harriet Wintlebury made a profound courtesy, and proceeded to repeat her song.

As Colin gazed, and gazed again, turned away his eyes, and as instantly fixed them upon the same beautiful object again, his bosom burned, and his cheeks grew flushed—he felt as though in the presence of a being whom he could think scarcely inferior to the angels—at least, he had never in his life seen *woman* as she is before. For what were the simple beings under that name whom he had met in the out-of-the-way country nook he had so recently left? What was his late mistress, Miss Sowersoft!—what the maids on the farm!—what even Fanny herself!—mere plain, dull, plodding, lifeless creatures of the feminine gender, and nothing more. But this enchanter!—his heart leaped up, and in that one moment he felt more of the deep yearning of love than ever in the course of his whole life he had felt before.

"Let us go nearer," he whispered to his companion; and in the next minute they were forcing their way down one of the passages between the forms toward the other end of the room. Before they had succeeded in obtaining a seat on the last form, close under the stage-lamps, Miss Harriet had concluded her melody, and retired amid considerable applause. Until the period of her reappearance the time occupied by other performers seemed to Colin endless. Under other circumstances, the novelty and freshness of such an entertainment would have beguiled

his attention deeply, and resolved hours into the seeming space of but a few minutes ; but now the sense of pleasure derived from this source was rendered dull and pointless by comparison with that far keener delight, that tumultuous throng of hopeful passions, which had so suddenly and strangely taken possession of his bosom. At length she came again—he started astonished. Could it be the same ? The clear bright complexion—(or what had seemed at the farther end of the room to be so)—now looked opaque and earthy ; the white was dead white, and the red as abruptly red as though St. Anthony had been busy with his pencil, patching those cheeks with fire ; while the substratum of bone and flesh looked worn into a shape of anxious pain, that gave the lie direct and palpable to the colourable pretensions of the surface. And then the handsome bust, which at a distance seemed so beautiful, now appeared a most miserable artistical mockery of nature ; and the fixed meaningless gaze—the mouth formally extended in order to display the teeth—the dead lack-lustre stare at the remote end of the room, calculated to produce an impression on the more distant portion of the audience—all combined deeply and strongly to impress the horrible conviction on the mind, that this poor creature, in spite of all assumptions and decorations to the contrary, was a *very poor*, worn-out, deplorable creature indeed ! It forced upon the spectator something like the idea of a death's head endeavouring to be merry—a skull fitted with glass eyes, and covered with a thin painted mask of parchment, striving to laugh and look happy, in order to be consistent with the laughter and the happiness around it. Add to this the hollow faint voice—(the mere echo of the sound it once had been)—pumped up from lungs that seemed to have lost all power—to have decayed until scarcely any portion remained—and we shall feel impressed, as did Colin, with a fearful, almost a terrible sense of the poor uses to which humanity is sometimes put, and of the deep wretchedness often existing among those whose occupation in life it is to *look gay*, whatever they may feel.

In truth, consumption was feeding on her, seemingly deep and irremediable. Yet she struggled on ; what else could she ? She still strove, still fulfilled her occupation every night, still sung, still tried to look merry, although her heart was all out of heart, and her bosom was filled with fear and anxiety from the dread sense of approaching death—too surely at hand—and she unprepared ! Perhaps to come to her on that very stage—perhaps *then* ! And all this to gain a morsel of daily bread !

Although reflections of this nature crowded on Colin's mind in a heavy throng, as he gazed on the poor made up form before him, still he could not free himself from the impression which her appearance had previously produced upon him. That which was artificial, and affected to others, was not so to his perceptions, for his inexperience would not allow him to see it. The appearance of modesty was to him modesty ; of grace, was grace ; of light-heartedness and joy, as real as though a single care had never entered that bosom since the day it first stemmed the rude tide of the world. And as for the rest—just as with every other imperfection which may exist in the object of any lover's hopes—so was it with hers. Through familiarity they were soon overlooked ; and, like the shadows on the moon, though they chequered, they did not extinguish the general light.

At the conclusion of the performance, Mr. Wintlebury borrowed ten shillings of Colin—promising to pay him again as soon as he could get into work—and they parted for the evening—our hero returning to his humble bed in Mrs. Popple's garret, to pass a restless night amid strangely-mingled visions of tavern concerts, and beautiful singing ladies.

As, in his present state of feeling, there was nothing which in his heart Colin so much desired as an opportunity of obliging his second-floor neighbour, Miss Wintlebury, it luckily happened that in the course of a very short time she failed not to afford him various opportunities of so doing, having in all probability been taught her cue by the brother. At one time she would send up a message to Mr. Clink, regretting that she was under the necessity of troubling her brother's friend, but if he could lend her a little tea and sugar, just to avoid the unpleasantness of sending out while it rained so very fast, she should feel exceedingly obliged to him indeed. At another she borrowed his loaf, because it was stale, and none but new was to be had at the baker's; or his cheese, because a friend had come in, and she had none of her own in the house; or a few shillings, until she could go out, and draw upon her employer; and at last she ventured, though very reluctantly indeed, to ask the loan, just for three days, of four pounds fifteen, if he *could* possibly do her that great obligation, in order to satisfy the impudent demands of the apothecary, the tea-dealer, the baker, and the butcher, who severally and respectively had peremptorily cut off the supplies of medicine, tea, bread, and mutton-chops, until certain arrears had been paid.

All these friendly applications Colin responded to with unparalleled promptitude, although the last one so very materially enlarged the hollow of his purse, that he began to marvel how he himself should contrive to clear his way as far as to the end of the next fortnight.

This position of affairs somewhat aroused him from the idle day-dream in which he had been indulging. It was high time that he set about doing something to earn a subsistence; for, besides the amount he had thus expended in supplying the wants of others, he had also lessened his stock very rapidly by attending nightly at the concert-room to which he had first been introduced, in order to gratify himself with those repeated glimpses of his mistress, without which he never felt at peace; as well as to hear her voice, which he thought the finest in the world, and to rejoice over the popular applause with which she there seldom failed to be greeted. For, singular as it may appear, he had never yet met with her in their own house, nor exchanged a single word with her in private upon any occasion whatever. His personal introduction yet remained to be made.

Several subsequent days he spent in various futile endeavours to obtain employment. Some, who otherwise would have engaged him, wanted a character from his last place. He had none to give; and, therefore was denied the opportunity of earning one. Others required a person partially acquainted with their business; and so his services could not be rendered available. Meantime, he had not neglected to call once or twice at the Yorkshire House, and to inquire whether any letter had arrived there directed for him. No. The squire had not written in reply to the letter he had despatched from that place, and all

hope of deriving assistance from that quarter seemed, of course, entirely banished. "Doubtless," thought he, "Mr. Lupton has heard some bad accounts of me, and has wholly given me up." In this conjecture our hero was, however, totally mistaken. Mr. Lupton had not yet returned from the excursion of a few weeks' duration, of which he spoke when Colin was at the hall; and, consequently, had not seen the letter in question. Neither, had he done so, would his return have been of any avail in this particular instance; since it most unfortunately happened for Colin that on the day but one following the arrival of his epistle, it so fell out that Dr. Rowel was called to attend the squire's housekeeper upon the attack of a sudden illness. On this occasion, while left in the drawing-room alone, the doctor's eye chanced to alight upon a number of unopened letters lying on the table, in readiness for the owner of the mansion on his arrival; and among them he espied one, on the corner of which was written the name of "Colin Clink." He hastily took it up: stole a glance at its contents by shining it against the sun; and, finding it to contain certain very serious statements touching himself, he took a bold step at once, and, regardless of consequences, put it into the fire. Before the servant returned to conduct him up stairs, every vestige of the letter had totally disappeared. Thus had Dr. Rowel not only for the time being saved himself, but also obtained that knowledge of which he stood in much need—the knowledge of Colin's place of retreat and particular address. Of these he instantly resolved to make the earliest possible use.

Disappointed in all his expectations, and defeated in every endeavour to obtain the means of making a livelihood, Colin returned to his little domicile, and on the spur of the moment wrote a very dolorous letter to his mother and Fanny, in which he set forth all his recent disasters, and the trouble he was now in, adding, that unless something or other to his advantage turned up very shortly he should scarcely know what way to turn himself for a living.

And yet, when he thought the matter more calmly over again, after the letter was despatched and could not be recalled, he plucked up heart, and for another evening at least drove away care by retiring to the Condor Tavern, and taking his accustomed place within easy sight of the adorable Harriet Wintlebury.

CHAPTER XVII.

Colin is pursued, and who his pursuer was.—A strange set-out, and a very pathetic parting.

DURING the time the transactions recently related were progressing, a strange hubbub had been raised at Whinmoor touching Colin's disappearance. Palethorpe waxed desperate, and Miss Sowersoft's temper curdled like an embryo cheese. Dire vengeance against him was threatened. York Castle and bread and water were the mildest things prescribed for him; although, in their opinion, he well deserved a halter. Mrs. Clink and Fanny had been heartily abused by Palethorpe for having "backed him up in burglary, and afterward connived at his running away from his work." The fact was, this worthy felt doubly enraged because he had missed an excellent chance of having a shot at him, and now

swore that, if ever he could lay hands upon him again, he would very nearly bray him into a pulp.

At this portentous period it was that Dr. Rowel made his appearance at the farm, (after his discovery of Colin's letter at Kiddal Hall,) and by all the arguments in his power raised the wrath of its inhabitants still higher against the young man, and even went so far as to promise, that as he was himself also an injured party, he had no objection to pay half of Palethorpe's expenses, if he would go after the culprit to London—whither, according to certain private information he had received, Colin had directed his flight. Palethorpe snapped at the offer as a hungry wolf might at a bone. He had long wished to see London, and a capital opportunity was here presented. He vowed that he would ferret out the lad before he came back again, though he should dive to the bottom of the Thames for him; and proposed to set out on the following day, to avoid farther loss of time.

This proposal being acceded to, nearly the whole night was expended by the attentive mistress in rigging him out for his journey. The chaise-cart was got ready early next morning to convey Palethorpe and his luggage to the coach-office at Leeds; and an old half-pint bottle filled with brandy and water, together with sandwiches to the extent of a quarter-loaf and two pounds of beef, were secretly inveigled by Miss Sowersoft into his top-coat pocket.

Having duly inquired whether everything was ready, Mr. Palethorpe was called into the parlour by his mistress, who, having shut the door, set her candle on the table, (for it was not yet daylight,) and began to talk to him in a tone more than usually serious.

"You are going," said she, "a long journey—a very long journey. I hope to heaven we shall see you safe back again. I'm sure I shall hardly sleep o' nights for knowing that you are not in the house; but wherever you are, now do remember what I say, and take care of yourself. We don't know what different places are till we see 'em; and I'm sure I almost feel afraid—when it comes to this last minnit—" Here she tucked up the corner of her apron, and placed it in close proximity with the corner of her eye. "I really feel afraid of trusting you there by yourself."

Palethorpe was here about to explain at large his own capabilities for governing his own rampant self, had not Miss Sowersoft derived additional vigour from the attempted interruption, and proceeded:

"I know you are plenty old enough to keep out of harm's way—that is certain: but then there are so many dangers that nobody can foresee, and temptations hung out beyond any single man's capacity to resist—I am afraid. I'm sure it would take a great load off my mind if I was going along with you—a very heavy load indeed. Ay, dear!"

"Oh, never heed, meesis," replied Palethorpe; "I shall get back as safe and sound as a rotten pear. A rotten pear, says I!—no, I mean as sound as a roach—trust me for that. I aren't going a-gate of no temptations, that's flat. Bless me! I should think there's both ale enough, and opportunities for folks to get married enough, i' Yorkshire, without goin' all the road to Lunnun for 'em!"

"Well," replied his mistress, "you are very discretionary at home. I say nothing about that; but perhaps, you know, when you're surrounded by so many things to distract your considerations, you might—a—a.

I'm sure I hardly know how to express myself fully ; but all I mean to say, is, that after all, you know—and do as we will to the contrary, yet somehow, as I was going to say, men will be men sometimes, and women women !”

As Miss Sowersoft uttered this very sagacious remark, she began to sob rather hysterically, and seemingly to demand the support of Mr. Palethorpe's arm. This he promptly offered ; a few more words in a consolatory tone escaped his lips ; the maid in the passage outside thought she heard a slight report or two, not unlike the uncorking of a bottle ; and in another minute the head farming-man hurried desperately out. He was afraid of being too late at Leeds, and in his hurry to rush through the dairy to get into the chaise-cart, which stood in the yard, he kicked over a pan of new milk, and plunged his other foot into a tub of hog-wash, both of which had just before been placed upon the ground by the said maid.

“Dang your stuff !” exclaimed he, dashing his foot against the overturned vessel ; “what, in the devil's name, isn't there room enough in Yorkshire to set your things down, without cramming 'em under people's feet like that !”

The maid laughed in his face, and Miss Sowersoft called lovingly after him not to mind it ; while Palethorpe leaped into the vehicle, and ordered Abel to drive as fast as he could into Briggate.

On the following day he opened his wandering eyes for the first time upon town.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Curiously illustrates the old saying, that a man may “go farther to fare worse.”

No sooner had Mr. Palethorpe arrived, than, following Dr. Rowel's directions, he marched off in a very business-like manner to the Yorkshire House, and inquired for Colin Clink. No such person was there ; although one of the female servants told him she believed a young man of that name had made a short stay at the house some weeks ago, and had called once or twice since ; but he had left long ago, and gone they knew not whither.

This information brought the pursuer to a dead stop. His scent was lost all at once ; and as he had not made provision out of the wits of other people for any disappointment of this kind, while his own were very backward in coming to his assistance, he suddenly felt that all was over. Moreover, he found London to be a very different place to what he had expected ; and for a stranger to set about in search of a lost man there, seemed worse even than hunting for a needle in a bottle of straw. Instead, therefore, of troubling himself just then any farther about the matter, he thought he would first sleep upon it, and in the mean time go about and see the sights. First he wended his way to the top of the Monument, having previously very carefully perused the inscription at its base. After that he ascended into the lantern of St. Paul's. He then travelled down to the Tower, and very narrowly escaped walking into the ditch just where there chanced to be a rail broken, while his eyes were turned up in curious scrutiny of the White Tower. He much longed to go in, but dared not, for fear of the soldiers, as he was not

hitherto aware that it was guarded so stoutly by a military force. When he got back into St. Martin's le Grand, and looked up at the Post-office clock, he was about to pull out his watch and compare dials, but, to his dismay, found that somebody had saved him the trouble by pulling it out before him. In his confusion he instinctively endeavoured to wipe his nose, but discovered that one of his best handkerchiefs was gone too. In this double dilemma he stared about him some minutes very oddly, and not a little to the amusement of certain cabmen, who stood hard by observing his motions with visages wide awake. He began to be afraid of remaining any longer in the street, and accordingly hurried back to the Yorkshire House, where he endeavoured to console himself under his losses by taking an extra quantity of Burton ale and gin-and-water.

These little bits of experience made him afterward so very cautious, that whenever he walked out he was continually engaged in cramming his hands, first one and then the other, into his coat-pockets, then into his breeches, in order to be assured that his money was safe; for he held it as a maxim, that no man who knew what he was about would leave his cash in a box, which anybody might unlock, at a public house where strangers were running in and out, and up and down stairs, all day long. He accordingly, for the greater safety, carried his whole stock about with him.

In this manner he wiled away nearly a week, waiting chances of meeting with Colin accidentally, and hoping that he might luckily call again at the Yorkshire House; in which case he had made provision for securing him, by leaving word that, if he *did* come, he was to be told that a very well-known acquaintance from the country had arrived, who wished to see him upon most particular business. But time passed on, his trap caught nothing, and after eight or nine days' stay, he found himself no forwarder, save in the amount of wonderful things he had seen, and the quantity of money he had expended, than he was when he parted with Miss Sowerseft. Disastrous as all this was, it is not to be wondered at that his courage evaporated very rapidly, and in fact became so very nearly dried wholly up, that he had made up his mind, after many efforts, to sneak back again into the country, invent the best tale he possibly could, in order to satisfy his "meesis" and the doctor, and sit down once again to his beer and bacon on the quiet farm, renouncing London, and every attempt to catch Colin Clink, at once and for ever.

Fortune, however, which, as we are told, ever watches over the brave, would not suffer him to go thus far, and undergo the fatigues and dangers of such a journey, merely to come to such an inglorious conclusion. And as Palethorpe manfully determined to have a good last night of it before he left town, and see for himself what life in London really was, the frail goddess took that favourable opportunity of adding a striking incident to the tail-piece of his chapter of accidents—an incident which, as it brought him very unexpectedly into the presence of Colin, and otherwise is worthy of particular note, I shall give in a chapter by itself.

CHAPTER XIX.

The singular meeting of Colin and Palethorpe.—A jolly night, and the results of it, with one of the most remarkable discoveries on record.

On the last afternoon of his intended stay in town, Mr. Palethorpe rambled as far as Regent's Park, and into the Zoological Gardens, where

he amused himself some time by tempting the bears with a bit of bun, without allowing them to get near enough to lay hold of it; a piece of dexterity on his own part which made him laugh heartily twenty times over: for the cleverness of it seemed to him excellent. When weary of that, he repaired to the monkey-cage, in anticipation of some excellent sport; but there he found many much more able fellows than himself; and in endeavouring to outwit a great baboon with a walnut, got one of his ears nearly twinged off, highly to the delight of a whole company of boys who stood by, and whose laughter and jeers eventually caused him to beat a retreat out of the gardens.

Having taken a pretty accurate survey of the West End, he descended Regent-street in the evening, and about nine o'clock might have been seen wending his way with indecisive step down Coventry-street, from the Piccadilly end, with a considerable amount of Barclay and Perkins's stout in his head—porter being such a rarity to him, that he thought it as well to make the best of it while he enjoyed the opportunity.

On the right hand side of Coventry-street he accidentally espied a fishmonger's shop. Palethorpe always enjoyed a good appetite for oysters whenever he could get them, and, as he had fixed his eyes upon a leaden tank full, he walked into the shop aforesaid, and requested the man to open him a lot. As fast as he opened them, Mr. Palethorpe swallowed them; while, as long as he continued to swallow, the man continued to open, keeping silent count of the number taken all the while, until in a loud voice he at last proclaimed a numerical amount of five dozen. Mr. Palethorpe then bid him desist, and, with great reluctance at the moment, paid the demand of a crown for his supper. Somehow, however, his stomach raised certain very cogent objections against thus suddenly being converted into an oyster-bed, and demanded the instant administration of a dram. This, however, he could not procure there, but was invited to walk into the room behind, where he might take wine at his leisure. Although Palethorpe did not much relish the notion, he did not feel in the best possible condition for quitting the shop and going elsewhere; and therefore, almost as a matter of necessity, adopted the waiter's suggestion. Pushing open a door, therefore, with an oval glass in it, he found himself all at once in one of the finest public apartments he had yet entered.

At first he felt almost doubtful whether he had not made a mistake, and walked into a chapel—the gallery round the walls and the pew-like seats very strongly favouring the idea. This notion was, however, very soon put to the rout by an individual, whom he had mistaken for a pew-opener, approaching him with the polite inquiry, what wine would he please to take.

"Oh, any'll do. One sort is just the same as another to me, for I know no difference," replied Palethorpe.

"Pint of sherry, perhaps, sir? Very well, sir." And before the Yorkshireman could find time to express either his acquiescence or his dissent, the waiter had disappeared to execute the order of his own suggestion.

When he returned, Palethorpe took the wine in silent dudgeon. Of course he had the appearance of an animal too remarkable not to attract attention anywhere in London, but especially so in the particular region where fortune had now condescended to cast him.

As far as he could discern anything of the matter, the company appeared of the highest respectability, if not, in fact, almost too good for him. But then, as everybody conducted themselves in the most free and easy manner possible, he was not long in making himself perfectly at home. The ladies, who were beautifully dressed and decorated with various sorts of flowers, struck him with particular admiration. All that disagreeable crust of reserve, in which country people are so prone to incase themselves, was here worn quite clean off; and he found no more trouble in entering into conversation with these ladies than he did at home in talking to his horses. Two of them politely invited themselves to his wine, and, without waiting permission, drank it off to his good health, and suggested to him to call for more. They playfully tweaked his nose, put his hat on their own heads, and invited him to partake of his own drink so very kindly and pressing, that at last it would scarcely have been known whether they or he had in reality paid for it.

About midnight, and at the particular request of a young lady who was taking leave, Sammy was prevailed on to escort her home; a piece of politeness which he felt most competent to discharge by calling a cab, as his own legs had by this time in great part lost the faculty of carrying the superstructure of his body with that precise degree of perpendicularity which is commonly considered essential to personal comfort and safety.

From that moment up to the occurrence of the following incident, his history is wrapped in the most profound and mysterious darkness.

On this eventful night, the intended last night of all Mr. Palethorpe's experiences in the metropolis, as fortune would have it, Colin Clink had treated himself with a sight of Vauxhall Gardens; and, as he remained to see the fireworks at the conclusion, he did not get away very early. Add to this the time necessarily occupied in taking refreshment, and walking all the way from the Gardens to London Bridge, and we shall not expect to find him at the top of Newington Road, on his way home, earlier than between one and two in the morning. As our hero walked rapidly up Blackman-street, he observed a man, clothed in a short, square-lapped coat, of a broad country-cut, staggering along before him very much as though he meditated going head-foremost at every object that presented itself on either side of the road. Occasionally he came to a full stop, and see-saw'd his body backward and forward, until the impetus gained one way either compelled him to recede a few paces, or plunged him again desperately forward. Now he seized a lamp-post, as though it were some dear, newly-recognized friend; and then made a furious sally to reach some advanced point of the wall on the other hand. Altogether his motions were so whimsical that Colin slackened his pace in order to keep behind, and thus enjoy the fun. The street was perfectly silent; not a soul besides themselves was about, and he had the farcical performer therefore altogether to himself. He did not enjoy the spectacle, however, very long. Scarcely had the man staggered a hundred yards farther before he went down on all fours; and, as he found himself incapable of rising again, he seemed, by his actions, as though he finally submitted to fate, and made up his mind to nestle there for the remainder of the night. Since, however, our hero, Colin, never was the lad to leave a fellow-creature helpless, without offering his assistance, he hastened forward, and taking him by the shoulder, bade him get up and go home.

"Where's meesis?" demanded the sot. "I want posset, and a posset I'll have, or be dang'd to me!"

Colin immediately recognized the voice. Bursting into a loud laugh, he raised the prostrate man's face toward the light, and beheld the features of his old and inveterate enemy, Mr. Samuel Palethorpe. What in the world could have brought him to town? Although Colin more than half suspected the real occasion, he determined to ascertain the truth.

"And where have you come from, my man?" demanded Colin.

"Come from!" repeated Sammy. "I'll tell you where I come from. I co—co—come from Whinmoor—Whinmoor, I say, in Yorkshire. Miss Zowerzoff's my meesis—and a very good meesis she is, I am happy to say. She knows me very well, and I know her. I wish she were here!"

"Well—well!" cried Colin; "but what have you come to London about?"

"Why, what do you think, now?" asked Palethorpe, with a peculiarly knowing look. "What *do* you think? Just guess. I'll bet a shilling you can't guess if you guess all night. No—no; no man knows my bizziness but myself. My name's Palethorpe, and I know two of that. Can you tell me, do you know anybody named Colin Clink here i' Lun-nun?"

"I do," said our hero. "I know him well."

"You do!" exclaimed Samuel, trying to start up and stare in his face, but sinking again in the effort; "then yo' are my man! Gi's hold on your hand, my lad. Dang his carcase! I'll kill him as sure as iver I touch him! I will—I tell you. I'll kill him dead on th' spot."

"But you mean to catch him first," said Colin, "don't you?"

"What do you mean? Catch him! I mean to catch him! Be civil, my lad, or else I shall put a spur in *your* sides afore you go."

"You brute!" exclaimed Colin, seizing him by the collar on each side of his neck, and holding his head stiff up with his knuckles—"look at me. I am Colin Clink. Now, you cowardly, drunken scoundrel, what have you not deserved at my hands?"

"Oh! what, you are he, are you?" gurgled Mr. Palethorpe. "Just let me go a minit, and I'll show you!"

"Come, then!" said Colin, and he pulled the said Mr. Palethorpe to the edge of the causeway. In the next moment he deposited him in the middle of a large dam which had been made in the gutter close by for the convenience of some bricklayers, who were repairing an adjoining house, telling him to "sit there, and sober himself; and the next time he tried to catch Colin Clink, to thank his stars if he came off no worse." So saying, he left him to the enjoyment of his "new patent water-bed," and his meditations.

Near the Borough town-hall Colin met a policeman, whom he informed of the hapless condition of a poor drunken countryman some distance down the street, and requested him to go to his assistance. He then made off at the best speed he could, and soon baffled all pursuit amid the intricate turnings of the city. True, he lost his way, still he reached his lodgings before four o'clock.

To return to Mr. Palethorpe. He had not yet seen even a tithe of his troubles. The sequel of his last adventure proved richer than all the rest. Between two and three o'clock in the afternoon of the following day he crept stealthily into the parlour of his inn, as "down in the mouth" as a beaten dog. He called for writing-materials, and addressed a strange scrawl to the Commercial Bank in Leeds, where it was known he had

deposited about three hundred pounds. He afterward retired to his bedroom, from which in a short time he issued with a bundle in his hand; and, after making certain confidential inquiries of the shoe-black, walked forth in the direction of Rosemary Lane. It seems pretty certain that John Boots directed him thither as one of the most eligible places in the city for the disposal of all sorts of worn-out or superfluous wearing-apparel, and one to which poor gentlemen in difficulties not unfrequently resorted. However that may be, the fact itself is positive, that on the evening of the second Saturday after his arrival, Mr. Palethorpe was seen in a very dejected mood, pacing along Rosemary Lane, toward Cabin-street, with a bundle tied up in a blue and white cotton handkerchief, under his arm.

As his eyes wandered from one side of the street to the other, he observed, idling at doors, or along the footway, a generation of low, dark men, who, by the peculiar cut of their countenances, might readily have been mistaken—especially by lamplight—for lineal and legitimate descendants of the old race of Grecian satyrs. Inhabiting places in which no other description of person could breathe, and carrying on their congenial frowsy trades in “Clo’—old clo’!” these people, with their families, live and thrive on the filth of all the other parts of the unapproachable city. Nothing comes amiss to them: the oldest garment has some profit in it, and the merest shred its fractional value. Their delight seems to be in a life amid black bags, and the dirty cast-off rags of every other portion of the great community; while the aspect of the region they inhabit—as if to keep all the rest from being put out of countenance—is desolate, dark, slimy, and enveloped in an atmosphere of eternal smoke. The very air seems pregnant with melancholy reminiscences of the faded glory of by-gone men, women, and times. The tarnished embroidery, the sooty red suits, the flabby old silks, the vamped-up hessians, what spectres do they not evoke as they dangle (ghostly mementos of departed greatness) beside the never-washed windows, or flap like an old arras, with every gust of wind against the besmeared and noxious walls! Where, perhaps, the legs of some gallant captain once found a local habitation, there the dirty Israelite now passing along feels ambitious to incase his own. The handkerchief of a bishop invites a “shop’y’s” nose; the last rejected beaver of the Lord Mayor awaits the acceptance of some rascally cranium, which the Lord Mayor would give half his dignity to “nab,” and “pop in quod.” Even some vanished great one’s walking-stick now sticks in the black corner of the Jew’s shop, waiting to be once again shaken by the handle, even though it be but during a brief proud hour on Sunday, by the lad who yesterday hawked cedar pencils through the streets at a halfpenny a piece.

“Buy, sir?—buy?—buy?” Mr. Palethorpe replied in the negative to a man who thus addressed him, but volunteered to sell. He produced the contents of his handkerchief; and before ten minutes more had elapsed, his best blue coat with gilt buttons, and a second pair of corduroys, became the property of the Jew, at one-third less than their value. The reason of this strange proceeding was that during the preceding night’s glorification the Yorkshireman had—in some way totally incomprehensible to himself—been eased of absolutely every farthing he possessed. He had, therefore, no alternative but to raise a little ready cash upon his clothes, until he could receive from the bank in Leeds, where

he had deposited his scrapings, enough to set himself straight again and pay his passage home.

Several times had the sun rolled over the head of this side of the world after the scene above-described, when, one rainy evening about dusk, as Miss Sowersoft was casting a weary and longing eye across the soddened fields which lay between Snitterton Lodge and the high road, to her inexpressible pleasure she beheld the well-known figure of Mr. Palethorpe making its way toward the house.

"Well, here you are again!" she exclaimed, as he flung down his top-coat, and demanded a jack to get his boots off. "How have you gone on? I see you haven't brought him with you, at all events."

Although Miss Sowersoft had made an inquiry the moment Mr. Palethorpe entered the house, she now refused to hear him talk until he had satisfied his appetite. This achievement occupied, of course, considerable time. He then, in the midst of an open-mouthed and anxious rural audience, consisting of every individual man, maid, and boy, upon the farm, related—not his own adventures, but the imaginary adventures of some person very closely resembling himself, who never lived, and whose peregrinations had only existed in the very little world of his own brain.

His expeditions had been most successful; for, although he had not exactly succeeded in discovering Colin's retreat—a mishap attributable to the enormous extent of London, and not to his own want of sagacity—yet he had astonished the natives there by such specimens of country talent as they were very little prepared for. He pulled out a new watch. "Look there," said he. "I got that through parting with the old 'un, and a better than that niver went on wheels. I bought some handkerchers for about half-price, and see'd more of Lunnun in ten days than many folks that have been a-gate there all their lives."

"Then you went 'top o' th' Monument?" demanded old George.

"To be sure I did!" exclaimed Palethorpe, "and St. Paul's Cathedral as well."

"I hope you did not get dropped on, anyhow," remarked Miss Sowersoft, inquiringly; for she really burned to know whether any of the fears she had expressed at his setting out had been realized.

"No, dang it! not I," replied Palethorpe, in a misgiving tone, though with a great assumption of bravery. Yet upon that subject, somehow, he could not expatiate. He felt tongue-tied in spite of himself; and then, as if desirous of escaping any farther explanation touching what he had individually done or not done, he got up and went to the pocket of his great-coat, from which he drew a Sunday newspaper that he had purchased as the coach was starting, and presenting it to Miss Sowersoft—"here," said he, "I've brought you th' latest news I could lay my hands on, just to let you see what sort of things they do i' th' big town. I haven't look'd at it myself yet, so you've the first peep, meesis."

Miss Sowersoft took the newspaper very graciously, and opened it. Strange news indeed she very soon found there. While Palethorpe was yet maintaining all the dignity of a hero, and stuffing his audience with marvellous accounts of his own exploits, Miss Sowersoft's eye fell upon a report under the head of "Police Intelligence," entitled, "A YORKSHIREMAN IN LONDON." She read it; but with such avidity and such a sombre expression of countenance, that the eyes of every one present were ir-

resistibly attracted toward her, and even Mr. Palethorpe's efforts to speak passed almost unobserved. At length Miss Sowersoft uttered a loud hysterical shriek, and fell back in her chair.

Palethorpe instinctively snatched at the newspaper; but, as Abel had seized it before him, only a portion of it reached the fire, into which it was instantly hurled. The part remaining in the grasp of the farming-man contained the awful cause of Miss Sowersoft's calamity. A fight might have ensued for the possession of that fragment also, had not Abel dexterously slipped round the table before Palethorpe could reach him, and, snatching up a lighted lantern that stood on the dresser, escaped into a hayloft; where, having drawn the ladder up after him, he sat down on a truss, and, while Palethorpe bawled and threatened vainly from beneath, deliberately read as follows:

"A YORKSHIREMAN IN LONDON.—Yesterday, a stupid-looking 'son of the soil' from Yorkshire, whose legs appeared to have been tied across a barrel during the previous part of his life, and who gave his name Samuel Palethorpe, was brought before their worships, charged by policeman G. 95, with having been found dead drunk in Blackman-street, Borough, between one and two o'clock that morning. When found he was sitting bolt-upright in a pool of lime-water about twelve inches deep, which had been made in the gutter by some bricklayers' labourers employed in mixing mortar near the spot. His hat was crushed into the form of a pancake, and was floating beside him; while he was calling in a stentorian voice for assistance. From the very deplorable statement he made, with tears in his eyes, it appeared that, after rambling about town the greater part of the previous day, in search of the 'lions' of London, during which time he had imbibed an immense quantity of heavy-wet, he repaired to a well-known house in the neighbourhood of the Haymarket, and regaled himself until midnight with wine and cigars. While there he picked up an acquaintance in the person of a 'lady,' (as he described her,) 'with a plum-coloured silk gown on, and one of the handsomest shawls he ever saw in his life.' As the 'lady' was very communicative with him, and was very polite, told him that she wished to marry, and how she liked him, he naturally concluded she might entertain no very deeply-rooted objection to himself. In order, therefore, to make a beginning in his courtship, he eventually consented to accompany her home. He believed her to be what she appeared, 'a lady,' and was over-persuaded by the hope of marrying a good fortune. One of the magistrates here expressed his astonishment that any man arrived at the age of the prisoner, (he appeared nearly forty-five,) even though brought up in the veriest wild in England, could possibly be such a fool as the individual before him represented himself. Mr. Palethorpe replied that he had several times read of ladies falling in love with cavaliers, and he thought such a thing might happen to him as well as to anybody else. (Laughter.)

"And what happened afterward?" asked the magistrate.

"MR. PALETHORPE.—'I don't know very well, for I'd had a sup too much. I aren't used to drink sich strong wine: but we went over a bridge, I think, becous I remember seeing some lights dance about; but where we went to I know no more than this man here.' (Pointing to the policeman.)

"How much money did you spend?"

"Whoy, unfortunately, I've lost every farthing I had."

"And how much had you about your person when you set out?"

"Please, sir, I had seven pounds in goold, and about twelve shillin' in shillin's, besides some ha'pence."

"Do you think you've been robbed, or did you spend it on the lady?"

"I don't know, sir—but it's all gone."

"Well, as you seem to have paid pretty dearly for your pleasure, I shall not fine you this time, but I should advise you to take better care the next time you come to London."

"The prisoner left the court very chopfallen, while one of the spectators as he passed whistled in his ear the tune of,

"When first in London I arrived, on a visit—on a visit!"

Before Abel had perused half the above extract he was in ecstasies: and when he had done he cut it out of the paper with his pocket-knife, in order the easier to preserve it for future use. The story soon became known throughout the country side, as Abel made a point of reading it aloud at every public-house he called at, and on every occasion when the hero of it chanced to displease him.

The gist of the joke, however, seemed, in the general opinion, to consist in the fact that Mr. Palethorpe himself had unwittingly brought it all the way from London in his own pocket, for the edification and amusement of the community. In fact, from that day until the end of his life, Samuel never heard the last of his expedition to London.

But how did he settle matters with his mistress? That question may be solved when other events of greater importance have been described.

CHAPTER XX.

Something strange on the staircase, with a needful reflection or two upon it.

By this time Colin's resources had become so low that but thirteen shillings remained; and of that about one-half would be due to his landlady in a few days. Yet he continued his kindness toward the poor singer on the second floor, and only the day previously had exchanged his last sovereign on her account. The feelings with which her appearance had first inspired him he could not wholly shake off; although between then and now he had become acquainted with circumstances which pointed out to him the necessity of setting such a connexion aside. In order to carry it the better into effect, he made up his mind to quit the house altogether—a step he could the more readily take, as he had not hitherto even seen Miss Wintlebury except on the stage; and she, on the other hand, could know no more of him than his kindness might have informed her of. About twelve o'clock, as he was descending the stairs, his sight was crossed on the first landing by a vision in a white dress, which flitted from Miss Wintlebury's chamber to her sitting-room. Its hair was tightly screwed up in bits of newspaper all over its head, very strongly resembling a clumsy piece of mosaic. Its face was of a horrible cream colour, and as dry as the hide of a rhinoceros. Its eyes dim and glazy. Its neck and shoulders—with respect to the development of tendons and sinews—not unlike an anatomical preparation. This surprising appearance no sooner heard Colin's footsteps approaching than it skipped rapidly into the sitting-room, and without turning to close the door, sat hastily down at a small table, on which stood a black

teapot, and one cup and saucer, as if with the intention of taking its breakfast.

Somewhat alarmed, Colin hastened down, and was glad to find Mrs. Popple on her hands and knees at the door, applying pipe-clay to the step. Of her he inquired the nature of the apparition he had seen; and was shocked, indeed, when he found that he had mistaken Miss Wintlebury herself for her own ghost. Still the fact was scarcely credible. Surely it was not possible to patch up such a shadow, into the handsome figure which had first inspired him with love; and the recollection of whose beauties still attended upon his imagination.

"Ah, sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Popple; "you ain't any conception what a poor creatur' she is. I can carry her about this house like a doll, she's so light and thin. She walks about more like a sperit than anything substantive. I often think of turning her out of house altogether, for I'm afraid I shall never get my rent of her; but then, again, when I'm going to do it, a summut seems to whisper to me, and say, 'Missis Popple—Missis Popple, let her alone a bit longer.' And that is the way we go on." Saying which, with a heavy sigh, she drained another ragfull of water from her bucket, and scrubbed away at the stones. Colin stood mute.

"She's dyin', sir, as fast as she can," added the landlady. "I niver see an indiwiwal in a more gallopin' consumption in my life."

Could he give up the poor creature of whom this was said! And yet, was it possible he could love the poor creature he had seen! Colin felt puzzled. Like many other gentlemen, therefore, in a similar predicament, he parted company with Mrs. Popple, without saying anything, lest he should possibly chance to say worse than nothing.

As the shock his feelings had sustained wore off, his previous resolutions grew weaker. Inclined to look on the best side, he began to reason himself into the belief that the lady was not so bad as represented. He had seen her, unluckily, under circumstances sufficiently disadvantageous to reduce to an ordinary standard even the greatest beauties living; and, as for his landlady's remarks, what did they amount to? People always magnify what they talk about. Perhaps Miss Wintlebury might soon recover, and make a fortune by that voice which now scarcely found her in bread.

Thoughts of this nature occupied his mind until his return.

Shortly afterward a circumstance occurred, which, as it settled the question of his love for the public singer, as well as another of importance to an individual in whom we have felt some concern, I shall lose no time in relating.

CHAPTER XXI.

A most uncommon courtship, a bit of jealousy, and a very plain declaration.

Not long had Colin been at home before a message was sent up by Miss Wintlebury, begging the favour of a few minutes' conversation. Poor Colin blushed to the eyes, and in a manner so hurried that he scarcely knew his own words, replied that he would wait upon her immediately. He took some time, nevertheless, in adjusting his dress; but at length, ashamed of hanging back any longer, he summoned a desperate resolution, and, like the leader of a forlorn hope, went on to his mistress's door.

For the fourth time he found Miss Harriet's appearance changed ; though this fourth appearance seemed the true one. She was yet young, and had been handsome. Her cheeks were slightly—very slightly painted. Her countenance, naturally intelligent, had been improved in expression by indulgence in the love of literature. The proportions of her figure were comely enough, and would not have matched ill beside even our hero's.

"I am afraid you will think me very bold, Mr. Clink," observed Miss Harriet, after the first forms had been gone through ; "but I wished to thank you for your exceeding kindness to one who is a mere stranger. I feel it the more, because, unfortunately, I have so rarely met with anything of the kind. I think my poor mother—and she has been gone many years—was the only creature that ever loved me !"

Her voice grew tremulous and her utterance convulsive.

"I do not scruple to say so now, because in the condition in which I am—I know I am—I am dying ; in that condition, I say, no scruples prevent me uttering what otherwise I should be ashamed to own, because I feel secure against any imputations. But feeling under no apprehension that anybody will look upon me in any other light than as a departing guest, I am not ashamed to speak as a woman openly ; for openly I must shortly speak before a far greater being than any here."

Colin sat mute and motionless, striving to divert his feelings by counting the flowers on the carpet ; but he could scarcely see them, his eyes were full. Miss Wintlebury continued—

"To-night I am unable to go through the exertion of pleasing those drunkards as usual. Nor is this the first warning I have had that the poor concert of my life is close upon its finale."

Accustomed as the young woman appeared to be to contemplate her own death, she yet displayed that feminine weakness of being unable to allude to it before another without tears.

"I hope, Miss," began Colin, but he could not get on—"I hope—"

"It is not for myself !" she exclaimed, resolutely ; "no, not for myself. That is little worth crying for, indeed."

She smiled with a ghastly expression, and continued—

"It is, sir, because I have it not in my power to repay you for your kindness. I must die in the debt of a stranger, for all help is now going from my hands. These few dresses and trinkets——"

And, as she sobbed out the words, she placed her hand upon a small heap of theatrical robes and decorations beside her.

"These are all—and a poor all they are—I have to repay you with, besides a buckle that I have here upon my band, which my mother gave me ; and that I wish you to keep when I am dead ; but I cannot part with it before."

She paused, and gazed upon the trinket of which she spoke as though the thoughts it awakened congealed her into stone ; for not a muscle of her countenance moved, and nothing showed she was alive save the rapid tears which dropped in painful noiselessness.

"No, that is not quite all," she resumed, almost in a whisper ; "there is a necklace that was given me at school : you shall have that, too. And I should like you to give it—I know you will forgive me saying so—give it, if there be any one in the world you love, give it *her*, and ask her to wear it for my poor sake !"

Colin was unused to sorrow ; nature would have way ; he could contain his feelings no longer, and burst into an audible fit of grief. When his words came he begged her to desist ; refused to take anything as a recompense ; and, in as encouraging a tone as he could assume, bid her cheer up. He said she might yet recover, and be happy—why not ? *He* would be her friend for ever, if she would but look on things more cheerfully.

And as he said this—he knew not how he did it, or why—but he kissed her forehead passionately, and pressed her hand within his own.

At that moment the room-door was very unceremoniously opened, and two persons stood before him.

Mrs. Popple had entered first, leading forward Fanny Woodruff !

"Colin !" exclaimed the latter, in a tone of mingled astonishment and reproach, at the same time retreating precipitately from the room, while Miss Wintlebury sharply reprov'd her landlady for this rudeness, and Mr. Clink assumed much more of the natural aspect of a fool than any person would have believed his features capable of. At length he spoke ; and, rushing out after Fanny, exclaimed,

"You shall not go ! I have done no wrong ! Come back !"

"Sir !" replied Fanny, "I have not accused you of anything, and, therefore, you need not defend yourself. But, indeed, Colin, I never expected this !"

"What—what have I done ?"

"Nothing, perhaps, that you have not a perfect right to do if you think proper ; however, I will not be troubled about it." She applied her handkerchief to her eyes. "I am sorry for having interrupted you ; but, since you are so much better engaged, I will never trouble you again as long as I live !"

"Will you hear me ?" demanded Colin.

"It is of no use. You have a right to do as you think proper."

"Of course I have, so long as I do right ! I never told you I loved you—never !"

Those words startled Fanny as with an earthquake ; shattering in one instant that visionary palace of Hope which her heart had been occupied for years in rearing. She looked incredulously in his face, and burst into tears.

"True," she murmured, "you never did—never ! I have betrayed myself. But here, sir," and she assumed as much firmness as possible, while she held a small packet out for his acceptance. "Take this ; I came to give it you. It is all your mother and I——" Her breathing became heavy. "We read your letter, and—Oh, save me ! save me !" She fell insensible into the arms of Mrs. Popple, who, at Colin's request, carried her into Miss Wintlebury's room, and placed her on the sofa.

The packet had fallen from her hand. It contained the three guineas which Colin had formerly given her, besides two from his mother, and the whole amount of Fanny's own savings, making in all between eight and nine pounds.

Her unexpected appearance is readily explained. On perusing the melancholy news contained in that letter of Colin's to which Fanny had alluded, she and his mother instantly formed the very natural conclusion that, bad as he had described his situation to be, he would make the best of it to them ; and that, therefore, it was much worse than his de-

scription. A thousand imaginary dangers thronged upon their minds, which they concluded nothing short of a personal visit could avert. Nothing less, indeed, could satisfy their feelings; and it was agreed that, instead of writing, Fanny should undertake the journey, carrying with her all the money for his use which their joint efforts could procure.

The attention of Mrs. Popple and Miss Wintlebury soon brought the young woman again to herself.

"Let me go!" said she. "I will return home! I cannot stay here!"

"No, Fanny," observed Mr. Clink, "that you shall not. You have mistaken me much; if you knew all, you would be the first to applaud me for what I have done."

"I shall never be happy any more!" sighed Fanny.

"I hope, young lady," said Miss Wintlebury, addressing her, "that I have not been any cause of unhappiness to you? Because, if so, perhaps it will be some comfort to you to know that I cannot continue so long. Look at me. Surely this poor frame cannot have excited either man's love, or woman's jealousy; for no one could be so weak as to dream of placing his happiness on such a broken reed, nor any one so foolish as to take alarm at a shadow, which a few days at most—perhaps a few hours—must remove for ever."

Fanny heard this discourse at first with indifference; but now she listened earnestly, and with evident surprise Miss Harriet continued:

"If you imagine that I stand between that young gentleman and yourself, be assured you are mistaken. Death, I too well know, has betrothed me; be at peace. You and Mr. Clink are evidently acquainted; if there be anything between you—if you love him, or he you, all I say is, May heaven bless you in it! With one like him you could not fail to be blessed. A nobler or a more generous creature never looked up to heaven."

Overcome by bodily weakness and her feelings, the poor girl sat down and sobbed bitterly. During some minutes not a word was uttered; nor until the last speaker again rose, took Fanny's hand, and led her toward Colin, who stood by the fire-place, looking as immovable as though he were cast in lead.

"Come," said she, "forget me, and let us see you friends."

Suiting the action to the sentiment, she placed Fanny's hand in Colin's. He gazed on her, then clasped her in his arms and kissed her.

That night the three supped together, and were happy. And, as Fanny had not as yet any place of abode, she shared Miss Wintlebury's apartment; while Colin passed, amid anxiety and excitement, an almost sleepless night.

Fanny did not choose to remain in town longer than the occasion rendered essential; but she related to Colin everything that could interest him respecting the home he had left.

Among other matters, she astonished him with the information that, shortly after his own flight from Bramleigh, her father had been removed by Dr. Rowel from Nabbfield, by night, to a distant part of the country. But, as some particulars of this movement will require to be laid before the reader in some subsequent chapter, I shall not trouble him with Fanny's statement here; merely observing that Mr. Clink impressed upon her the necessity, both on her father's account and his own, of her informing Mr. Lupton of the whole transaction as early as possible.

This Fanny promised to perform. But when the period of departure came she returned with a heavy heart. The declaration made by Colin weighed heavily upon her bosom: nor did his subsequent kindness tend to any permanent alleviation of her sorrow. While perplexed as Colin had felt between what he thought his duty, and inclination, he so far discovered the absence of any real regret at Fanny's departure, that, in the mortification consequent on her discovery of that fact, she determined to banish him altogether from her mind in every shape, save as a friend.

CHAPTER XXII.

The reader is courteously introduced into a bone and bottle shop, and made acquainted with Peter Veriquear, and the family of the Veriquears. A night adventure.

In a lane leading out of Hare-street, which is situated about the middle of the parish of Bethnal Green, resided a certain tradesman, one Peter Veriquear by name; into whose service, as a man of all work, our hero may now be supposed to have entered: by the recommendation of Mistress Popple it was that he obtained this eligible situation, which found him a sort of endless employment at the rate of six shillings per week, bed and board included.

When Colin first applied about the place, Mr. Veriquear replied—

"If you want a situation, young man, that is your business and not mine. If I have a place to dispose of, I have; and if I haven't, why, I haven't. That is my business, and not yours."

Colin hinted something about what Mrs. Popple had said.

"Well!" exclaimed Veriquear, "if Mrs. Popple told you so, she did. That is Mrs. Popple's business, and neither yours nor mine."

"Then I am mistaken, sir?"

"I did not say you were mistaken. But, if you think you are, that is your business and not mine."

"Then, what, sir," asked Colin, "am I to understand?"

"Why," replied Veriquear, "I shall say the same to you as I do to all young men—understand your own business, if you have any, and if you haven't, understand how to get one—that is the next best thing."

"And that," rejoined our hero, "is exactly what I am desirous of doing."

"Well, if you are, you are; that is your own concern."

"You seem to be fond of joking," remarked Mr. Clink.

"No, sir," answered Veriquear; "the man is not born that ever knew me joke in my life. I have my own way, and that is no business of anybody's. Other people have theirs, and that is none of mine."

"But can you give me any employment, sir?"

"Well, I suppose young men must live—though that is their concern; and I must find 'em work if I can—though that is mine."

After some farther conversation, in which Mr. Veriquear's character displayed itself much as above depicted, he arrived at the conclusion, that Colin should be employed according to the terms previously stated.

Though Mr. Veriquear's premises stood nominally two stories high, and occupied a frontage some forty feet long, the roof scarcely reached to the chamber windows of more modern erections on either side. The front wall—a composition of timber, bricks, and plaster—had pas-

tially given way, and now stood in an indescribably wry position. Having forcibly pulled the whole mass of tiling along with it, the ridge of the roof resembled the half-dislocated back-bone of some fossil alligator, while a weather-beaten chimney, with great gaps between the bricks, leaned sentimentally toward a dead gable, like Charlotte lamenting the sorrows of Werter. The windows, small and heavy, seemed to have been inserted according to chance; for, exactly in those places where nobody would have expected them, there they were. By the side of the door flaunted some yards of filthy drapery, which flapped in the faces of the passers-by; and old bottles, second-hand basins, bits of rags, and other "marine stores," decorated a window, which might be supposed glazed with clarified cow's-horn. Above, a huge doll, clad in long clothes of dirty dimity, swung like some criminal on a gibbet. At the edge of the causeway, which had never been paved, and directly opposite the entrance, was a board elevated on a pole, on which was painted, "Wholesale and retail Rag, Bone, and Bottle Warehouse."

Into this den Colin introduced himself one night, between eight and nine o'clock. That evening he had spent with Miss Wintlebury, and had taken his adieu of her only after he had prevailed upon her to accept one of three sovereigns which he retained out of the sum brought by Fanny.

When he arrived at his new abode, there was no light, save what little found its way thither from the heavens, now scantily spotted with stars. Veriquear stood against the door-post, staring into the gloom, and blowing through his teeth a doleful noise, compounded of singing and whistling. Colin felt low-spirited.

"It grows dark very fast, sir," said he, addressing Mr. Veriquear.

"Yes," replied that gentleman; "but I can't help that. What nature chooses to do is no business of ours."

"Certainly," rejoined Mr. Clink; "I said so only because it is customary to express some opinion."

"Well, that is your own concern; for my part I never make it my business either to damn or praise the weather. Nature knows her own affairs without my meddling."

Peter turned and led into the shop his new assistant. Groping in the direction of a distant inner door, through which the dim remains of a fire were visible, Colin jostled against a stand, which rattled as though all the bottles in the kingdom had been jingled together; and then, in his endeavour to steer clearer on the contrary side, fell on a heap of tailors' ends.

"It's my business to get a light," said Veriquear. "Stop!"

Colin maintained his position, in accordance with the advice, lest, by making another endeavour, he should exchange for a less comfortable anchorage.

When Peter returned, Colin obtained a dim vision of the objects about him. The place was so black, that its limits seemed indefinable, save overhead, and there the proximity of his crown to the rafters reminded him that no less care would be required in humouring Mr. Veriquear's house than its master; while the quality of its contents almost led him to believe he had entered some grand national closet, in which was deposited all the unserviceable stuff of the community. The reason was, Peter Veriquear dealt in everything he could turn a penny by, and,

being large in his speculations, had a vast mass of property upon his premises.

As a new emigrant to America betakes himself to a survey of his locality before he pitches his tent, so did Peter conduct Mr. Clink over the whole of his territory that night, in order that he might become acquainted early with the field of his future labours. Through a dirty unpaved yard behind, he conducted him over various shed-like warehouses, stored with every description of rags, with bottles of all degrees of extension, and into a deathly region of bones, which made the moveless air smell grave-like, and stored the imagination with as many skeleton horses as might garnish twenty German tales.

In a wide loft, accessible by a step ladder, and open to the laths on which the tiles were hung, Colin observed a small bed and a chair, with a broken piece of looking-glass fixed on the wall with nails, in order, as it might appear, that the tenant might contemplate a representative of himself, in lack of better company.

"Is this room occupied?" asked Colin.

"When there is anybody in it," replied Veriquear, "It is my business to keep these premises safe, as it is other people's to rob them if they could."

"Why, surely, sir," objected Mr. Clink, "nobody would think of stealing such things as these!"

"What is worth buying and selling is worth stealing. I should think so if it were my affair to rob; just as I think it worth guarding, being my business to hinder robbery."

"Then, shall I sleep here?" demanded Colin.

"I suppose you will, if you can. You want sleep, I dare say; but that you must manage yourself."

Our hero said nothing, but thought the Fates could not have been in the most amiable humour when they delivered her into the hands of Mr. Veriquear.

Returning, the merchant led his assistant into an underground kitchen, where a round mahogany-coloured cheese, three gaunt sticks of celery, and a brown loaf were placed upon a small oak table, having one stem in the centre, and three crooked feet, after the fashion of a washer-woman's Italian iron. The family was here assembled. Mrs. Veriquear, a sharp-nosed pyroligneous-acid-looking woman, sat on a low chair, nursing a baby; a child of eighteen months old slept close by in a wicker basket, ingeniously contrived to fit a frame-work on four wheels, which thus served to carry the children about on a Sunday; while two other youngsters were squabbling on the hearth about a three-legged stool; and another, the eldest, was penning most villainous pot-hooks on the back of a piece of butter-paper, under the superintendence of his mother. Farthest from the fire, as well as the candle-light, sat one who was in the family though not of it, a maiden of nineteen, Miss Aphra Marvel, a niece of Mr. Veriquear, who had been bequeathed to him by her father, along with a small tenement worth about fifteen pounds a year, the income from which was considered as a set-off against the cost of her bringing up. But could her parent have foreknown the services which his daughter was destined to perform, it is probable he would have acknowledged the propriety of charging fifteen pounds per annum as a compensation for her labour, rather than have left that sum in yearly

requital of her cost. From twelve years of age, her duty had been to make the fires, sweep the house, wash and nurse the babies, as they successively appeared, wait on Mrs. Veriquear, prepare meals, make beds, mend clothes, and, in short, do everything which could possibly be done; yet she was regarded as an interloper, contributing to the diminution of that stock which ought to be applied to the advancement of their own prospects.

When Colin entered, Aphra cast her eyes momentarily up, and half blushed as she resumed her sewing. The children stared in wonder at him. The baby began to squeal; while Mrs. Veriquear cast an ill-tempered eye upon him, and then shook her infant into an absolute scream with the exclamation—

"What are you crying at, you little fool! *he's* none going to hurt you, I'll take care of that. Hush—hush—hush-sh-sh!" And away went the rocking-chair.

When they sat down to supper, it was discovered that Master William had picked out the hearts of two sticks of celery, and extracted a plug, by way of taster, from the cheese. This being a case that demanded summary punishment, Colin got nothing to eat until Mr. Veriquear had risen, and applied a few inches of old cane to the lad's shoulders.

"My boy, as you have made it your business to pull that plug out, it becomes mine to plug you."

Master William howled before he was touched; his brother Ned cried because Bill did; and Mrs. Veriquear stormed at her husband, because he could not trash the lad without making noise enough to wake the dead. Miss Marvel looked as solemn during this farce as though it had been a tragedy; while Colin squeezed his nose up in his handkerchief to prevent Mrs. Veriquear seeing how his fancy was tickled at this exhibition.

Uninviting as his dormitory had appeared, the kitchen and its inhabitants seemed so much more so, that it was with comparative delight he heard the clock strike ten, as a signal for him to take possession of a tin lantern, and carrying a bunch of keys wherewith to lock himself in, to stride across the yard to his comfortless chamber.

During the first few hours it was in vain he tried to coax himself to sleep; and, therefore, he lay with his eyes open, counting the chinks between the tiles over his head, and listening to the compliments which passed between some friendly cats, whose tails and backs were elevated in a picturesque manner outside the ridge above him.

It could not be far off one o'clock when a sound, as of something stirring below, reached his ears. Though by no means timid, the young man's heart suddenly jumped, while a degree of uncomfortable moisture oozed through his skin, like the dew upon a cold can of liquor in summer. Possibly the noise might be occasioned by rats taking advantage of this untimely hour to make free with Mr. Veriquear's bones; or cats in pursuit of the aforesaid rats; or the wind making merry among the bottles. Whatever the sound, however, it was repeated more distinctly. There was evidently something alive as well as himself. Was it possible that he could have got into a wrong place, and that they meditated murdering him for the sake of his body? He thought of a pitch-plaster being suddenly stuck over his mouth by some unseen hand, and the conceit aroused him to determination. He slipped out of bed, and, in his stockings and shirt, groped blindly to the ladder, which he silently descended.

Having reached the floor below, he for the first time bethought himself that he had no weapon, not even a stick. But the bone-heap was hard by, and he possessed himself of the thigh-bone of a horse, which he contrived, without disturbance, to draw from among a collection of similar relics. Again the noise was repeated, and carried conviction to Colin's mind that Mr. Veriquear's precautions were more needful than he had previously believed; for that there were thieves about the premises he now no more doubted than he doubted his own existence. Clasp- ing his bony cudgel, he placed himself in a good offensive attitude, and stood prepared.

Not the fighting gladiator of antiquity, nor the modern statue dubbed Achilles, in Hyde Park, looks more heroic than did Colin, as, clad in his simple but classic drapery, he brandished his tremendous marrow-bone, and defied his unseen foe.

At that moment the skull of some old charger, which lay on the window-sill, seemed to become partially and mysteriously illuminated, while the shadowy form of a man hard by became indistinctly visible. Colin maintained his standing in silence, his eyes fixed upon the figure.

In a few moments it turned slowly round, and began to advance toward him, but whether with any intention of accosting him he could not yet divine. Shortly it reached within arms length of him, when the thought flashed on the young man's mind that now was the time; so, raising his bone, he took aim, and, before a protest against his measure could be entered, nearly felled the intruder to the earth.

"Don't strike! don't strike!" cried the individual thus unexpectedly attacked. "I'm Veriquear!—I'm Veriquear!"

"Certainly," thought Colin, "you are very queer, indeed!" for he instantly recognised the voice of his employer. "I'm sorry—"

"All right! quite right!" said Peter, drawing a dark-lantern from behind him, and throwing a bundle of rays on the figure of his assistant. "It was decidedly your business to do as you have done; and I'm much obliged to you—. For if you had not made it your duty to defend the place, I should have turned you away to-morrow morning. I have done this to try your courage."

"But I regret having struck you," protested Mr. Clink.

"As to that," replied Peter, "that, you know, is your business; and if I like to run the risk, why, that, of course, is mine. Only I never yet had a man that I did not try in the same way; and many a one have I discharged because they would not turn again."

His hearer did not particularly admire Peter's method of trying the mettle of his men; but, inasmuch as it had so far ingratiated him into the favour of his employer, did not lament the occurrence. He accordingly betook himself again to his pallet; while Mr. Veriquear departed by the same way he had come, highly gratified with the courage of Mr. Clink, and rejoicing in the blow that hero had bestowed upon him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A Sunday sight in London.—Colin meets with his best friend, and receives a heart-breaking epistle from Miss Wintlebury.

It was not during the six days only, but on Sundays also, that Colin found employment. As regularly as the Sabbath came, he was converted into an animal of draught, by being placed at the pole of that cradle-coach

already alluded to, and engaged during stated hours in giving his employer's young family an airing among the delightful precincts of Hoxton New Town and the Hackney road. On one of these occasions he luckily, though accidentally, met with a gentleman whom he much wished to see, and to whom I shall have much pleasure in reintroducing the reader.

The day was uncommonly cold, considering the time of year. Colin's face, as he breasted the blast, resembled a carrot; while behind him sat four little red-and-blue looking animals, muffled and "tiled" with immense brimmed hats, which gave them much the appearance of a basket of young flap mushrooms.

"Don't cry, my dears!" said Colin, "don't cry, and you shall have some pudding as soon as the baker has baked it. We shall soon be at home, Georgy. See what a big dog that is!"

A tap on the shoulder with the end of a walking-cane interrupted his exclamations, and at the same moment a voice addressed him with,

"And do not you remember whose dog he is?"

Colin turned hastily, and beheld Squire Lupton standing on the curbstone. If his cheeks were red ~~before~~, they became scarlet now; and for the moment he could not utter a word.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Lupton, as he gazed on the four-wheeled basket, "so young, and such a family? Bless my soul! surely they are not all your own!"

Colin did the best he could to clear himself of such an awful responsibility. Indeed, the squire did not require any proof, as he had given utterance to the remark only as a piece of pleasantry.

As the streets of London do not offer peculiar facilities for conversation, especially upon such important matters as those which the squire and Colin felt it necessary to discuss, a brief colloquy was all that passed on the present occasion, though sufficiently long to inform Mr. Lupton how poor a situation the young man had been obliged to accept, to find himself in the necessities of life. On the other hand, Colin ascertained that the squire's absence from Kiddal, just after his last singular interview with him there, was in consequence of a visit to the metropolis, to which was owing his meeting with him at the present moment. Before they parted, Mr. Lupton charged him, on his return, to give Mr. Veriquear immediate warning, as he had another mode of life in view for him.

In the meantime, he requested him to wait upon him the following evening at a certain hotel at the west end of the town, where they might discuss all necessary matters at leisure.

When Colin informed his employer Peter of his adventure, and the consequence to which it had led, "Very well," said Veriquear, "if you wish to leave me, that is no business of mine. As you came, so you must go. I am sorry to part with you; though I don't know what business it is of mine to grieve about it. Only if you consider yourself right in leaving so suddenly, I shall make it my duty not to pay you this week's wages."

Colin protested that, as circumstances had altered with him, he would willingly forego any demand. Peter felt gratified at the sacrifice his man thus frankly volunteered; and, by way of requital, told him not only that he might depart on any day that he pleased, but added,

"And if at any time I can be of service to you, apply to me ; but, mind you, it must not be about other people's business. If it is any business of mine, I'll meddle ; but your business, you know, is your own ; other people's is theirs ; and mine is mine, and nobody else's."

Colin would that evening have called at Mrs. Popple's, and communicated the intelligence to poor Miss Wintlebury, had he not been arrested, just as he was setting out, by a small packet addressed to himself, which some unknown hand had left at the door, and within which he found a trifling article or two of remembrance, and the following note :

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"It is with great satisfaction I write these few lines, informing you that yesterday my father arrived from the country, bringing intelligence that a small fortune had been left him by my uncle unexpectedly, and that he has this day taken my brother and myself back to our native place to pass the rest of our lives, and in hopes that thereby my own may be prolonged. But my poor dear father will be deceived ! He knows not what I have gone through, and never shall know. Nevertheless, the country will be to me like a new heaven for the short time I am permitted to enjoy it.

"I can scarcely express the delight I feel in being enabled, through this reverse in our condition, to enclose a sum which, I trust, will leave me your debtor only in that gratitude which no payment can wipe away.

"The other trifles perhaps you may keep, if not too poor for acceptance ; but as I know that our continued acquaintance could end only in misery to us both, I deem it the proper course to withhold from you all knowledge of our future abode ; and if you will in one thing more oblige me, never attempt to seek it out.

"Heaven bless you and yours ! And that you may be lastingly happy will be the prayer of
HARRIET."

A ten-pound note, a ring, and a brooch were enclosed.

Colin immediately repaired to his late lodgings, in hopes of seeing the writer ; but he was too late ; neither could he obtain from the landlady any information as to what part of the country she had retired.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Colin's interview with Squire Lupton, and what it led to.—A bait to catch the Doctor.

On reaching the hotel, Colin found Mr. Lupton seated in a room up stairs, with a table spread for two ; dinner was brought up shortly after his arrival. During their repast, the young man could not avoid being continually reminded with what familiarity he was treated by his entertainer—a familiarity the more unaccountable, because all his previous ideas of the higher classes had been derived solely from casual observation of that high bearing and seeming austerity which usually exist in their intercourse with the inhabitants of a country district. To be sure, he had done him an essential service, by saving him from severe injury, if not from death ; but that he thought might be well rewarded without all this personal condescension. But Mr. Lupton seemed to take pains to render him easy—to make him at home as it were, and cause him to feel upon a level with himself.

Though Colin could not account for all this, it had its effect. By the

time the meal was over, and at the squire's solicitations he had imbibed various glasses of sherry, he found himself as much at liberty as in Miss Sowersoft's kitchen.

As Mr. Lupton evinced considerable anxiety to know what had brought him to London; and Colin himself felt no less desirous to explain, two long hours scarcely sufficed for a narrative, which caused in the mind of Mr. Lupton the utmost astonishment. The freedom with which Mr. Clink expressed his sentiments respecting the death of the lawyer, and the hand which he believed Dr. Rowel had had in that event, raised doubts of the young man's prudence, though at the same time it went far to convince him of the propriety of placing the doctor himself in security, until a full investigation could be gone into. That he was open to a serious charge was evident; and the squire could come to no other conclusion than that it was his duty as a magistrate to have the doctor apprehended.

While Colin related in unassuming language his own attempt to set Woodruff at liberty, together with the disasters which had pursued him in consequence, Mr. Lupton's countenance grew now grave, now expressive of admiration, and anon involuntarily convulsed with emotions which he could not conceal. In truth, the father's heart was touched. He felt and admired as the height of magnanimity what other men might have commended merely as a good action.

When Colin had concluded, the squire looked earnestly in his face during a few moments; he filled his glass and Colin's too, but his hand trembled as he did it; again he looked at him, and again his eyes were earthward.

"My boy!" said he, but faltered—"my boy! I am proud of you; but your presence makes me ashamed. I bitterly regret it, and yet I ought not, when it has given me such a noble mind as this!"

He paused, and then, as though with some sudden determination to shake off unwelcome reflections, observed—

"But, come—drink your wine. Let us to business. I told you I should do something for you. What I have heard to-night has not lessened that determination. First, have you left that vagabond place you were living in?"

Colin replied, that he had informed Veriquear of his intention to leave, and was at liberty to depart at any hour.

"Then leave to-morrow," observed Mr. Lupton. "I will find you fitting apartments elsewhere. Do you like reading?"

"Much more," replied the young man, "than my opportunities have enabled me to gratify."

"I am glad to hear it. You shall have books, and fit yourself for better things than you seem to be born to. But never mind that. And money? I suppose the bottle merchant has not filled your pockets."

Colin observed that he had ten pounds, though not through Peter Veriquear. At the same time he related to the squire in what manner he had come by it, and how Miss Wintlebury's conduct had convinced him she was a worthy young woman.

"Have nothing to do with a girl like that," said Mr. Lupton. "I have seen similar things before now. No, my boy; think nothing more about her. As to her being in want, and dying, why, the thing is so common that the widest stretch of benevolence could not cover more

than a span in comparison with the world. I like charity ; but the world renders it needful for people to hold their heads on their own level. There is more in store for you than you can anticipate. I have no other than—Well, never mind. But the law knows me, my boy, as the last of my family ; for, unluckily, my marriage has been like no marriage. Did you ever see Mrs. Lupton at Kiddal ?”

“Never, that I am aware of,” answered Colin.

The squire fell into a fit of musing, during which he beat his foot upon the ground abstractedly.

“Well !” he exclaimed, as if starting afresh to life, “there is that doctor. We must catch him somehow. He is a scoundrel, I am afraid ; though it seems a pity to hang the poor devil too. I’ll tell you how we will do it. I will write to him in a day or two, inviting him here on business. He will suspect nothing, and come of course. You shall have an opportunity of meeting him. We will hear what he has to say ; and means shall be provided beforehand to seize him, if I find him guilty.”

This proposition for entrapping the wily doctor having been finally decided upon, with the understanding that Colin should early be apprized of his arrival, he received a hearty shake of the hand, and took his leave.

In accordance with the squire’s wishes, he took leave next day of the Veriquear family, and repaired to comfortable apartments in the neighbourhood of Bedford-square, which Mr. Lupton had engaged for him. Neither did that gentleman forget to despatch Colin to a fashionable tailor, for the purpose of being thoroughly new-rigged ; so that, before the time arrived for his interview with the doctor, he made as gentlemanly appearance as any beau about town.

Some few days afterward a note from the squire informed him that Rowel had taken the bait, and would be at his hotel at seven.

Elated with the hope, not only of securing Woodruff’s liberation, but also of getting the doctor punished, Colin set out at an early hour, and arrived some twenty minutes before the time fixed for Rowel’s appearance.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Doctor caught, and caged.—Woodruff’s removal, and where to.

SCARCELY had the clock struck seven before the gentleman of whom they were in expectation was introduced.

He addressed himself familiarly to the squire, but scarcely cast a look upon Colin, whom, “disguised as a gentleman,” he did not seem to know, until Mr. Lupton introduced him by name. Then, indeed, he started, and looked perplexed in what manner to regard the young man.

“Happy to see you, Mr. Clink,” said he. “I have been anxious to meet with you now for some time. If I am not mistaken, you are the same gentleman who did me the honour to climb the wall of my premises, awhile ago ?”

“The same, sir,” replied Colin.

“Ah !—indeed ! You hear that, Mr. Lupton !”

The squire assumed an air of astonishment, in order to encourage the doctor. It was evident he fancied he had got Colin “on the hip,” and was drawing from him a confession before the very face of a magistrate ; while Mr. Lupton’s countenance tended to confirm the notion.

"But, sir," said the doctor, blandly addressing the last-named gentleman, "you have business with me. Only, as I have a serious charge to make against this young gentleman, and most unexpectedly met with him here—"

"I beg you will proceed," objected the squire; "and be assured, if you have any charge to make against him, I shall gladly hear it; for I have taken him into my confidence. And if I am deceived—"

"Sir," said the doctor, gravely, "I fear you are. You know who he is, of course!"

"Why, sir, who is he?" demanded Mr. Lupton.

"Who is he, sir! I'll tell you, sir, who he is. That young man, sir—he, sir—he is neither more nor less, sir, than the son of a little huckster woman in your own village, sir."

"And what then, doctor?"

"Besides that, Mr. Lupton, he is an insipient housebreaker. I charge him with having made a burglarious attempt on my premises at Nabbfield, for which he was obliged to fly the country; and you, sir, will see the propriety of putting his person in a position of security."

"You feel convinced his intention was to rob you?" asked the squire.

"Sir," replied the doctor, "the thing speaks for itself. A young man forms a plan to enter my premises: comes at ten o'clock at night—a burglarious hour; climbs my outer wall by a rope-ladder—"

"It seems more like a love affair," interrupted the squire.

"So I thought," answered Rowel, "at first: because I found some fragments of a letter; but I could make nothing of them."

"Have you those fragments by you?"

"I have a copy, which I kept in case of need," said the doctor.

"Perhaps you will read it, Mr. Rowel," observed Mr. Lupton.

"Certainly," replied he; and drawing from his pocket-book a paper containing some scattered portions of the letter which Colin Clink had addressed to James Woodruff, the torn fragments of which Rowel had detected after James had buried them, he handed to the squire:

"The young woman—is necessary—in your yard until ten o'clock at night—If you should—try—until you do succeed—stand—thickest—in the corner. Colin Clink—will do his best to get—Fanny will be able—any night—at ten o'clock."

No sooner had Mr. Lupton perused this fragment than he pronounced the whole to have been unequivocally a love affair. There could be no doubt about the matter.

Rowel objected to this interpretation, and persisted in expressing his opinion that the young man harboured no good motives.

"Perhaps," said he, addressing Mr. Clink, "you will so far oblige Mr. Lupton as to explain what really were your motives?"

"He need not be at that trouble," observed Mr. Lupton, "until I have asked you, doctor, a few questions, which, I dare say, you can readily answer."

"Oh, certainly, sir. Ask anything. I shall have great pleasure in affording you every information. And allow me to add, how deeply I feel the honour you have done me in demanding my attendance, while you are surrounded by so much of the first talent and experience that the profession can boast of. I trust the case is not a serious one. Allow me, sir."

The doctor drew his chair near that of Mr. Lupton, and extended his

fingers to feel his pulse. The last-named gentleman pretended not to observe this invitation, as he remarked—

"I am afraid, Mr. Rowel, the case is a very serious one indeed."

"Indeed! Let us hope the best. Explain the symptoms, if you please."

"The first," replied the squire, "is this: that youth with whom you have been talking appears to have reasons for believing that, for many years, you have kept imprisoned as a lunatic a man of sound mind."

The doctor's countenance underwent a sudden change.

"Sir!" he exclaimed, "you are not serious?"

"I certainly am not joking," replied Mr. Lupton.

"Then am I to believe it possible," rejoined the doctor, "that you, sir, can have descended so far as to listen to the idle tales which such a boy may have picked up among the gossips of a village? It surely, sir, cannot be needful for me to disabuse your mind of prejudices of this kind—to inform you how the suspicions of the vulgar are apt to attach to any professional man, associated, as I am, with a very unfortunate class of patients."

"I anticipate all you would say," observed the squire, "and appreciate the force of your remarks. At the same time I should be glad to know whether you have not a patient named Woodruff?"

"Emphatically, then, sir," replied the doctor, "I HAVE NOT."

"And never had?"

"That I will not say."

"You have removed him?"

"There is no such individual in my care."

"Is he at liberty?"

"I think, Mr. Lupton," replied the doctor, smoothly, "you will allow that, without offence, I may decline, after what has been said, to give farther explanation of a purely professional affair, for which I do not hold myself responsible, save as a matter of courtesy, to any man."

"Sir," replied the squire, seriously, "where reason exists for even the slightest suspicion—I do not say that wrong *has* been done—the responsibility you disclaim cannot be set aside; and that some suspicion I do entertain, it is needless to scruple avowing."

"Did I not feel assured," answered Rowel, "from the many years I have enjoyed Mr. Lupton's acquaintance, that he can scarcely intend to offer me insult, the course I ought to adopt—"

"Whatever course you may adopt," interrupted the squire, "will not alter mine. A remarkable disclosure has been made to me respecting a patient in your keeping, as well as regarding the death of the late lawyer of Bramleigh."

These words startled the doctor in an extreme degree. They seemed to strike him as might a sudden sickness that turns the brain giddy; starting from his chair, with his eyes fixed fiercely on Colin, he advanced toward him, exclaiming,

"What other falsehood, villain, have you dared to utter? If there be law in the land for such infamous defamation, I'll punish you for it, though it cost me my life! Have you dared to say that I had anything to do with Skinwell's death, sir?"

"I have said to Mr. Lupton, what I believe to be true," replied Colin, "that you helped to kill him."

"It's a lie!—a lie!—a d—d lie! you slanderous vagabond!"

The doctor would inevitably have committed a personal assault upon Mr. Clink, had he not, in the midst of his rage, been restrained by certain reasons, arising from the evident capability of the young man to turn again, and convert the chastiser into the chastised. He therefore contented himself with fretting about the room as might some irritated cur, haunted with the spectre of a tin-pan appended to his tail. In the midst of the "very whirlwind of his passion," he snatched up his hat, as though unexpectedly seized with an idea of the propriety of taking leave; but Mr. Lupton kept an eye upon him.

"Not yet, sir, if you please," observed the squire, interposing. "I must perform an unpleasant office: but, nevertheless, Mr. Rowel, it is my duty to tell you that, for the present, you are my prisoner."

"I deny it!" exclaimed the doctor. "I am no prisoner!"

"That we will ascertain," replied Mr. Lupton, as he rapped on the table, while the doctor used his endeavours to force his way out.

Before he could effect this object, the door was thrown back, and two servants of the law entered. A warrant, which Mr. Lupton had prepared beforehand, was produced, and in a very comfortable space of time the doctor was placed in a coach, and driven to certain appropriate lodgings, which the country has provided for gentlemen who have been so unlucky as to be inveigled into the commission of criminal offences.

The removal of Woodruff from the doctor's establishment has been before alluded to; while the declaration made by that worthy to Mr. Lupton that he had no such person on his premises, has borne evidence to the fact.

It was quite true. For, after the attempt which Colin had so unsuccessfully made to effect Mr. Woodruff's escape, Rowel became convinced—as the secret was out—that his charge would no longer be safe within the asylum at Bramleigh. He therefore seized the earliest opportunity to convey him by night to the residence of the doctor's own brother—an old-fashioned brick mansion upon the borders of a heathy waste, which formerly constituted one of the finest portions of the old forest of Sherwood.

It was even now studded with the remains of ancient oaks, which had sheltered many a bold archer in times gone by, but now sufficed only to give additional dreariness to the solitary landscape.

The removal, however, of James Woodruff to this place had not been effected without Fanny's knowledge; and for the possession of this fact, it is believed, she was indebted to Mrs. Rowel. Not knowing what step to take, Fanny was no sooner made acquainted with the removal which Rowel contemplated, than she communicated it to her master, the young man who had succeeded the deceased Mr. Skinwell, one Sylvester by name; and a man who, though but a crest-fallen-looking affair outside, had, when occasion needed, considerable pluck within. No sooner was he informed of the affair than he volunteered his assistance. In accordance with the plan he proposed, himself and Fanny were prepared, on the intended night of Woodruff's removal, quietly to follow the vehicle that contained him until it should arrive at its destination; having ascertained which, they would take the most prompt steps within their power to insure his restoration to his friends. In accordance with this arrangement they acted, and at a convenient distance followed in a gig, as they thought, unobserved. On Sylvester's subsequently making application at

the house described, and to which he had seen Woodruff driven, he found Dr. Rowel, who expressed surprise at seeing him, and on being informed of the nature of his mission, declared that Mr. Sylvester was mistaken. In proof whereof, he conducted him into a chamber where lay a gentleman sick in bed, who, the doctor averred, was the person he had brought in the night before, for the benefit of the purer air of the forest. Beyond this Sylvester saw nothing to warrant Fanny's suspicions; while the girl herself declared that that man certainly was not the father of whom they were in search. In fact, so admirably had the doctor managed, that Fanny began to think herself that she was labouring under mistake; more especially when the sick man concurred in the statement made by the doctor, and averred that he had been brought from Nabbfield the preceding night. And he spoke the truth; for, in fact, the sick man was no other than Robson, the doctor's assistant, fitted with a very consumptive-looking nightcap, a bedgown over his shirt, and a bottle of hot water at his heels to make him look like an invalid; while Woodruff himself, shortly after his arrival, had been again removed—in consequence of the doctor's suspicions that he was followed—to a more secret place in the heart of the waste, where, it was trusted, he might be safely kept the remainder of his days, or even put to death, if such a step should be deemed advisable.

In consequence of the doctor's stratagem, Fanny and Mr. Sylvester returned disappointed to their home.

Such, in substance, was the story related by Fanny to Colin on her visit to town: and which he again had communicated to Mr. Lupton.

Whether the arrest of Dr. Rowel, when it became known to the brother, of whom we have spoken, might not have precipitated some tragical conclusion of Woodruff's life, is doubtful, had not a singular communication concerning him been subsequently made to Colin.

CHAPTER XXVI.

London Bridge, and an unexpected scene upon it.

It was about four o'clock—sometime before daylight—one morning, nearly a month after the events described, that Mr. Lupton and Colin might have been seen wending their way along the chilly streets, in the direction of London bridge. Saving the footfalls of the watch, the rattle of some early carriage over the pavement, or now and then the asthmatical cough of some poor old creature turned out thus early, in cloak and covered chair, to sit with charcoal fire and coffee in the streets, there were no audible signs that any soul existed there besides themselves. London was asleep. This Goliath of cities had lain down wearied, and for a time lost itself in forgetfulness.

"Five," said Colin, "is, I think, the time, and the city side."

As he said this he drew from his pocket the communication to which allusion was made in the last chapter, and again perused it.

The reader must here be informed that the letter now in Colin's hand had been addressed to him in the first instance at Mr. Veriquear's, and thence had been forwarded to his present residence. It came from some anonymous correspondent, evidently residing not far from the place to which Woodruff had been carried: but its contents will best explain themselves.

"Sir—I understand that you feel some interest in the fate of a Mr. James Woodruff. That man is now in my power, either to liberate or to detain for life, according as you may answer this. You HAVE AN OBJECT TO CARRY OUT, SO HAVE I. If you are prepared to serve me I will put this Woodruff into your hands: if not, neither you nor his daughter may ever see him more. Meet me *alone* at the north end of London bridge, at five on the morning of the—th, and I will explain particulars. At that time it will be as secret there as in a desert, and you will feel more secure. You will know the writer of this when you see a man make a cross with his finger in the air."

This strange communication Colin had laid before Mr. Lupton; and the only conjecture they could form was, that it had been written by Rowel's brother, who—having heard of the imprisonment of that gentleman—had resorted to this expedient in the hope of compromising the matter by, as it were, exchanging prisoners, and perhaps stipulating for farther proceedings being stayed. There were objections to this interpretation, but it seemed the only plausible one they could hit on.

However, as Mr. Lupton suspected that possibly some treachery might be concealed, and that it was a plot to be revenged on Colin, he determined to accompany him; but, on their arrival near the place appointed, to fall back, though still keeping sufficiently near to distinguish a signal which Colin was to give in case of need.

The bridge was at hand. Over the parapet to the left, and considerably below them, long rows of lights, illuminating the walls of life-deserted warehouses, pointed out the site of that noisy gully, Thames-street. Before them, farther on, lost in mist, and yet lingering smoke, rose beyond the water one solitary tower, looming darker than all around it, but relieved still farther back by a flush of dull, mysterious light, which, though it showed nothing distinctly, emphatically marked the existence beyond of many an unseen mass of building like that by which they were immediately surrounded. And now they are on the bridge alone. It is not yet five. The sight is magnificent. Behold these two sides of a mighty city, separated by a scarcely-seen gulf, on which streams of light, reflected from night-lamps afar off, ripple as though so many of the pillars of fire that lighted the Israelites of old were on the waves. Up the great stream or down it—the uprearing of men's hands—house, church, and palace appear alike illimitable. All those mean and minor details, which confound the eye and distract the attention during daylight, are now swallowed up and resolved into one broad whole. The dense and unmeasured mass of building which meets the sight every way, seems resolved into a solid. Line on line and height on height extending away till lost utterly in the far obscurity of the void horizon. Without any great strain of the imagination this scene might be mistaken for a splendid dream of Tyre, Palmyra, or Babylon—cities whose giant memories loom in the mind as images that cannot be fully compassed from their very vastness. While under our feet flows the dull, deceptive stream, that has borne on its bosom the wealth of kingdoms; that has found in its bed a thousand last resting-places for human misery; and that in its stormy wrath has swallowed happiness, when jollity forgot in temporary delirium that boats are frail, and that but a slender plank stood between itself and a deep grave.

As Colin cast a scrutinizing eye around, in the hope of meeting his correspondent, the clocks far and near chimed five. Almost with the last

stroke of the bell footsteps were heard on the city side of the bridge. A bricklayer's labourer, with a short pipe in his mouth, passed; then a woman—if woman she could be called—torn, dirty, and deplorable to look upon, staggering under the influence of last night's excess; but neither made a sign. Behind them followed an old man, roughly clad in the costume of the poorer classes of our country villages, saving that a long coat supplied the place of smock-frock, while his nether extremities were finished off with quarter boots, laced up to the ancles.

A feeling, which displayed itself in his flushed features, shot through Colin's veins as the first sight of this man came across him. Had he seen him before? It seemed so; but when? where? --

The old man hesitated as he gazed on Colin, and then cast a searching glance around. The figure of Mr. Lupton was dimly visible at some distance. Colin leaned idly against the wall, his eyes fixed intently on the old man, who now again was approaching him. The sign was made—the cross in the air—and our hero accosted him.

"I believe you wish to speak to me: you sent a letter to me a short time ago."

"Nay, now!" replied the old man, "what occasion have you to tell *me* that. If I wrote I know it without explanation; and your appearance here is a sufficient assurance that you have received it. Do you know who I am?"

"I do not," said Colin, "though it seems as I had seen you before."

"Humph! well—well!" exclaimed the old man, "then you are now talking to old Jerry Clink, your own grandfather."

"Clink!" ejaculated the young man. "My grandfather!"

"Now, why ask them questions again? Haven't I answered 'em?"

"But, is it possible? I never knew I had a grandfather."

"Ay, ay, I see how it is," replied Jerry; "I'm a poor man, and you are aping the gentleman. But I risked my life once to be revenged for you, only some meddler came across and balked me. I'll do it yet, though; and I want you to help me. The cause is yours as well as mine; for the injury is of a mother to you, though of a daughter to me; and the man who will not defend his mother, or revenge her disgrace, ought to be cast into the bottomless pit."

Colin stood astonished at this speech. He scarcely knew what he said, but faltered out,

"Who, sir, has dared to say anything to my mother's dishonour, or to bring her into any disgrace?"

Old Jerry tapped him with serious significance on the shoulder.

"Your father, boy—your father!"

"How!" exclaimed the young man, in a tone of deep excitement: "who is he? for I never knew who was my father."

"You—" replied Jerry, bitterly, "ought never to have been born!"

"What can you mean, man, by all this?" demanded Colin.

"I tell you," answered the man, "your father is a villain, and you—but never mind. Since you are alive, show that you are worthy to live by resenting your mother's injuries. My vengeance has been untiring, but it has not succeeded. Together we can do anything. True, the man must be called as he is, your father. What then? The punishment of such fathers cannot come from better hands than their son's. They that sow the wind, let them reap the whirlwind."

"What is it," demanded Colin, "that you would propose?"

"See you," said Jerry, drawing closer, "you are in love with a girl, Fanny Woodruff. Nay, do not interrupt me. I tell you you love her, and can never marry any one else. Her father is confined as a madman. I am his keeper. You want to liberate him, and rightly too. *He* has told me all about it. Now, let me see the spirit of a man in you; take up your mother's cause, and he shall by me be set at liberty. Join hand and heart with me against the villain, your father."

"Who is he?" again demanded Colin.

"Lupton of Kiddal," answered Jerry.

"Mr. Lupton my father!"

"The same. I shot at him once."

"You?"

"I, with this same right hand."

"And I," added Colin, "prevented it, and saved you from the gallows."

Old Jerry stood confounded. His countenance changed with deadly fury, and in the next moment he rushed upon Colin with apparently the intention of forcing him over the balustrades.

A moment sufficed for his signal, which brought Mr. Lupton to the spot. The recognition between Jerry and himself was the process of a moment; and, while the latter strove to secure the former without violence, Jerry desperately aimed to bury in his bosom a long knife, which he held open in his hand. The combined exertions of Mr. Lupton and Colin were, however, too much for him, and would eventually have achieved his capture, had not Jerry, with a reckless desperation and agility, which struck both his assailants with horror and astonishment, leaped the wall of the bridge on finding himself at the point of being taken, and casting his knife and coat from him, plunged headlong into the Thames.

It was a wild leap, an insane flight into the arms of death. There was no splash in the water, but a dull, leaden sound came up, as when a heavy weight is plunged into a deep gulf. It was as though the water made no aperture, and threw up no spray; but gulfed him sullenly, as though such prey was not worth rejoicing over.

Father and son seemed petrified; not more from what they had seen than—in the case of the latter, at least—had heard also from the suicide. For that a suicide he was who could doubt? Who might take that leap, and live?

During a brief space they dared not even cast their eyes down the fearful height; the deed had paralyzed them. But, as Colin's eyes were fixed intensely on the waves, a something seemed to struggle across a ripple of light. Could it be the old man?

Boats were got out, the river was traversed, and both banks were searched, in hopes of finding him, providing that he had escaped; but all efforts proved ineffectual.

The cause of Mr. Lupton's kindness was a secret to Colin no longer. But in how different a position did he seem to stand to that gentleman now, to what he had done even one brief hour ago! Within that space what painful truths had been cleared up; what difficulties and embarrassments thrown around his future conduct toward nearly every person in whose fate his heart was interested! But the case of old Jerry, his grandfather, so resolutely bent on spilling the blood of his own father, out of a stern principle of mistaken justice, seemed to him the worst. He foresaw that, unless Jerry was drowned, all his address would be re-

quired to settle the hostility between that man and his father without that bitter and ignominious consequence which would doom him to behold his mother's parent expiate upon a scaffold his crime of having twice attempted the assassination of Mr. Lupton; more especially as the last-named gentleman was with the utmost difficulty dissuaded from instantaneously setting on foot such measures as could scarcely have failed in producing the apprehension of old Clink. In this, however, he for the present succeeded; but so deeply was he overwhelmed with the fearful transactions of the morning that he begged the squire to allow him a day or two's reflection ere he undertook the duty of explaining to him what had passed between the old man and himself, as well as his reasons for earnestly desiring that an intended murderer should be left unmolested. It was on one condition only that Mr. Lupton consented to acquiesce in this request. That condition was—to be told who his fierce assailant could possibly be. Colin hesitated, and at length burst into tears as he uttered—"My mother's father!"

The squire turned pale as ashes, while a sensible tremor shook his whole frame. He grasped Colin's hand, but said nothing. Those words called up something in each mind, which now made both dumb. They shook hands, and parted.

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

Reappearance of an unexpected customer; together with what passed at a certain interview.

DAY had pretty well broken as our hero trudged back homeward alone. It was one of those dull, leaden, misty, and chilly mornings, by no means calculated to raise the spirits of any one situated as was poor Colin.

Scarcely knowing what to do, he turned off at the top of Cheapside, walked into a well-known coffee-house in the vicinity of the post-office, and ordered breakfast. Two or three tables occupied the room, at which a few early risers were sitting quaffing coffee from cups that held half a pint each, and which, from their shape, might readily have been mistaken for so many half-pint pots of ale. Well-fingered books were scattered about, and magazines, fitted into temporary covers, lay in piles upon the broad chimney-piece. Shortly, the morning papers were brought in by a lad with a bundle of them under his arm, a circumstance productive of a momentary scramble on the part of those who were anxious to possess themselves of the intelligence of the day, before departing to their occupations. Colin's breakfast was introduced by a little active boy; and scarcely had our hero begun stirring the mysterious-looking fluid before him with an old dingy pewter spoon, than he involuntarily started, as though he had received the shock of an overcharged battery. The spoon dropped from his hand, and his hand upon the coffee-cup, and upset it. He had heard the voice of Jerry Clink in another part of the room, savagely demanding more toast and another pint of very hot coffee, as he had had enough *cold* water already!

Were voices from the dead in the habit of calling for hot coffee in early breakfast houses, Colin would have felt assured that he heard one on the present occasion ; since it appeared, if not absolutely impossible, at least the height of improbability, that the veritable Jerry Clink himself could be there in his own proper person. There, however, he assuredly was ; a fact which his grandson soon confirmed, when he peeped round a projecting corner, and beheld the man with whom he had recently had so fierce a struggle sitting in his wet clothes, and minus his coat, within a very short distance of him.

For reasons sufficiently obvious, Colin suffered him to take his meal, and afterward his departure, without making his own presence known to him. Anxious, however, not wholly to lose sight of him again, as the liberation of Mr. Woodruff appeared to depend upon him, though in a manner yet unaccounted for, our hero quietly dodged him, until he observed him enter an old clothes shop in the Goswell road, from which, after a time, he again emerged with a coat on—new to the present possessor, though old in the opinion of the gentleman whose shoulders it had last adorned.

In this manner he followed unperceived in the old man's wake, but did not venture to accost him until, after a considerable walk, he pulled up at a small deserted-looking public-house at the rear of Islington, which appeared to offer the privacy requisite for their second meeting.

As Jerry had no particular desire, under present circumstances, to mingle with all such chance customers as might come in, he avoided the common drinking-room, and walked into a parlour, the air of which smelled like that of a well some time since fumigated with tobacco smoke. The table was dull, as though accustomed to be cleaned with a dish-cloth : the floor spread with coarse sand : while the window looked out upon a back-yard nearly as large as an ordinary closet.

As Jerry seemed inclined to stop a while, a fat unwashed girl, with her hair half out of her cap, and her countenance curiously smeared with ashes and black-lead, came in to light a fire already 'built' in the grate, and composed of the worn-out fibres of a superannuated besom.

"Glass of ale !" demanded the girl, as she blew out her candle, and nipped the snuff with her fingers.

Jerry fixed his eyes upon her with a degree of sternness amounting almost to ferocity.

"What master taught you, young woman," said he, "to ask a gentleman coming into your house to take ale, before it is ascertained that he drinks malt-liquor ? Learn your business better, miss, and go and bring me some hot water, and half a quartern of rum in it."

Scarcely had the girl departed ere Colin entered the room. Jerry looked at him during the space of some moments, and then turned to the fire-place, without uttering a word.

"It is more than might have been expected," observed Colin, taking a chair, and speaking in an assumed tone of careless surprise, "that I should have the good fortune to meet with you so early again this morning. But I am thankful indeed to find you alive and unharmed, after expecting nothing less than that you must have met your death in a dozen different dangers."

"You thankful !" exclaimed Jerry. "Nay, nay, now !—What ! hy-poecritical, like all the rest of the world ! You care nothing for me, so

don't pretend it—no, nor for your mother neither. Though a poor old man, sir, I am proud to be honest; and from this day forward shall disown you. You are too great a coward, sir."

"To be induced to lift my hand against the life of a man who has befriended me, and is my own father, too, most certainly I am," replied Colin.

"What—bribery!" exclaimed Jerry; "purchased with fine clothes, I see! I say, you are too much of the worm."

"To injure my father, I am."

"Or to revenge your mother's wrongs."

"No, sir; I deny it. But I will not do it as you wish."

"And any other way it is impossible."

"I hope not," replied Colin. "An injury may be great; but there is such a thing as restitution. Mr. Lupton is kind to me."

"To you? But what is that to your mother, or to me, her father? Ay, ay, I see, young man, it is all self, self! *Mr. Lupton is very kind to me—true—to me, and that is enough.*"

"No, it is not enough," answered our hero. "A great deal more must be done, and may be done, if, to begin with, I can but make you and Mr. Lupton friends."

"FRIENDS!" exclaimed Jerry—"FRIENDS! Utter that word again, sir—"

"I do; I repeat it," he continued; "and I am not such a coward as to fear that you will attempt to harm me, because I say that, both for my mother's sake and your own, for Mr. Lupton's and mine, you must be friends. Remember, if you have something to forgive him, he has a great deal to forgive you also."

"He something to forgive me! What is it? I suppose for having spared him so long. But if I spare him much longer, may I never be forgiven where I shall better want it!"

"It is but this hour or two ago," Colin replied, "that I prevailed on him not to raise the hue and cry after you until things could be explained, although you have twice attempted his life."

"Is that it? Is that his forgiveness? Then I hurl it back in his face, and in yours, and tell him I want none of it! If he wants to take me, let him, and I will sit here till he comes. Fetch him, and let him try; and then, if the third time does not do for all, I shall well deserve a gallops for being such a bungler at my business."

"He has no desire to injure you at all," said Colin.

"How kind of him!" retorted Jerry, "seeing how good he has been to my daughter, and how badly I have rewarded him for it!"

"But you must know how much the law puts in his power."

"I care neither for the law nor his power. My law is my own, and that I shall abide by."

Not to prolong this dialogue, I shall merely observe, that Jerry Clink concluded it by emphatically declaring, that never to the end of his life should he give up this the great object for which he lived, and this asseveration he ratified by all such infernal powers as could conveniently be summed up into one long oath-like sentence.

Finding all his efforts to mollify the determination of a bloody vengeance, which Jerry still so violently entertained, altogether vain, Colin could not at the moment form any other conclusion than that which pointed out;

the propriety of securing Jerry, in order to ensure Mr. Lupton's safety. This, however, from the consequences which must follow, was a step from which he turned with horror. Was there no way by which to avoid the dreadful necessity of involving his own mother's parent in the pains of a fearful criminal law? How devoutly did he wish that he could be a reconciler of those whose own evils had brought them into this depth of trouble! Then, indeed, all might be at least so far well, as any ending may be which comes of so sad a beginning; for he felt that, after the disclosures which had that morning been made, the brightest light of his future life was dimmed.

Still he clung to the hope that the old man's violence might be mitigated, as he became more familiar with the thoughts of atonement being made to his daughter, and as the kindness of Mr. Lupton to himself should be rendered more evident.

The agitation consequent on these reflections caused him almost to forget the object he had in view with respect to Woodruff. Before, however, their interview terminated, Colin again alluded to the subject, and requested at least to be informed by what chance it could have happened that the gentleman alluded to could have been confided to the keeping of Jerry Chink.

"Why, as to that," replied Jerry, "I've no particular objection to tell you; but mind, I shall go no farther. Don't inquire whether he is likely to be dead or alive next week—where he is—or anything else about him. You remember that night I jumped out o' the window at Kiddal Hall, when, but for *your* meddling, I should have brought down my game without twice loading? Well, I got into the woods safe enough; but, knowing the place would be too hot to hold me for a while, I went off into a different part of the country. I changed my dress and name, and at last pitched my tent in a solitary part of Sherwood Forest, where I never saw man, and no man saw me, for weeks together. However, as I gathered ling for making besoms, and carried them about the country, I got to be known; and among the rest, I fell in with a Mr. Rowel, who lived on the edge of the waste, and who behaved very well to me. Well, one day he came down to my rock-hole, and told me as how he wanted me to take a madman under my keeping, who had been brought to his house by his brother, and whom they wanted, for particular reasons, to get out of the way. 'Well,' said I to him, 'bring him down; I care for neither a madman nor the devil.' They accordingly brought him, tied hand and foot, and blindfolded, pitched him into my place, and there I have had him ever since, and been well paid for my trouble, or else I should not have been here. However, when the man himself told me his story, I found he was not more mad than them that sent him; and so, as your mother had told me all about your part of the affair besides—for *she* knew where I was gone to—I thought it a fair chance for making you do as a son ought, when, perhaps, it did not lie so conveniently in my power. But I am deceived in you; and sooner than I'll ask anybody else again to do my business, may I be sunk to the lowest pit of perdition!"

"Say no more," observed Colin, interrupting him, "but just answer me this—"

"Mind," said Jerry, "I clapped an injunction on you."

"Very well," remarked our hero; "I'll ask no questions."

But he reflected that Jerry's abode would now be no difficult thing to discover, and that, with management, it might readily be surprised, and Woodruff's liberation effected.

One thing more only did he now wish to be made acquainted with, for on that depended the course he should adopt with respect to Jerry himself. He wished to ascertain whether it was the old man's intention to remain, seeking opportunities for gratifying his revenge, or to return at once to the country.

"I shall not stay here," replied Jerry, "for I can trust none of you; but when least expected, Mr. Lupton will find me by his side."

Trusting to put Mr. Lupton on his guard, and hoping to avert danger altogether, without appeal to legal protection, Colin concluded not to molest the old man.

Thus, then, he parted with Jerry, forming, as he returned townward, a very ingenious scheme for countermining the plans of which Rowel and his brother had made Jerry Clink the instrument.

CHAPTER II.

In which Mr. Lupton explains to Colin the story of himself and his lady.

WHEN next Colin met the squire, it was under the influence of such feelings as scarcely left him at liberty to speak; while Mr. Lupton, on his part, received him with that quiet, melancholy, though unmolested, air, which marked emphatically a man upon whom the force of circumstances has produced a lasting sense of dejection.

"For some time past," said he, taking Colin's hand—"for some time past, my boy, I have felt that it must come to this. Ever since the time when Providence so singularly threw it in your power to save me from a violent end—and from *such* a hand too!—I have been as a changed man. By that event Heaven seemed to lay, as it were, a palpable finger upon my soul, the dint of which is everlasting. That I should have been so saved appears to me a lesson, in which Providence intended at once to admonish me of my criminality, and to remind me of its mercy."

Mr. Lupton covered his eyes with his hand. In a few minutes he continued—

"From that moment I foresaw that, sooner or later, you must know all. Now you do know all; and that in such a way, as to render any farther allusion to it needless. The subject is at least a painful one. I now acknowledge you as my son; and I confess that a proud, though painful, time it is. Save in yours, and my own, the blood of an ancient and honourable family runs in no human veins. You are grown to manhood, and the circumstances which Providence has brought about enable me to address you thus without impropriety. But you must be told, my boy, that I was the very last of my race. My father knew it; he lamented over it; but he cherished and guarded me because of it. I know it too. With our ideas of descent, it is the bitterest thought in a man's breast to think that here the stream must stop. Anxiety for my life helped to bring my father to the grave earlier than nature would have called him;—he died while yet I was young. But before he died, he bound me to marry one of the members of an opulent family. I did so, and the lady he had selected became my wife. There were circumstances between Mrs. Lupton and myself which, while they made her deem herself

most unhappy in her fate, left me no less so in opinion of mine. Years passed on, and I was still *THE LAST*. Beyond this I need not go. Only this I will say, that, under circumstances which the world may deem criminal, there may be hidden feelings, and springs of action, which no heart knows but his that contains them, and which, through the force of perhaps erroneous notions, have become equally strong with right principles, and may therefore be received in palliation."

"With regard to Mrs. Lupton," continued the squire, "as I intended shortly to introduce you to her, it may be as well to inform you that the satisfaction your presence in my house will give must not be judged from *her* reception of you. What it may be I cannot foresee. But it is needful you should be introduced to her as *the heir of Kiddal*, before she dies. Had she acceded to my wishes years ago—had we, as I desired, been divorced before you were born, this present trouble would never have come upon us; but that proceeding she wholly resisted. And though there are circumstances, which might place the power of adopting such an alternative in my own hands; yet, rather than so deeply wound the feelings of a woman who loved me, and whom I had loved, I have chosen to pass years of unavailing regret, and come to this at last. I have neglected her, it is true, partly in hopes of inducing her to give way, and partly because I had no heart to be a hypocrite. But her fault was in loving me, when she should have forgotten me. She *was* my wife, and such she determined to live and die."

Mr. Lupton subsequently informed Colin, that although the lady had, during some years past, lived apart from him, yet that recently she had expressed her intention to return to the old hall, and to pass the following winter there. On that occasion it was purposed that Colin should meet her.

I should be doing injustice to my hero were I to disguise the satisfaction which he could not fail to feel from the prospects that Mr. Lupton opened before him. To think that from a poor farmer's boy he should thus suddenly have risen to the rank of a squire's son, with the certainty of a great fortune, and such a fine old house as Kiddal Hall. What a triumph did it not give him over all the paltry and tyrannical souls who had made his life miserable.

These matters disposed of, Colin seized this opportunity to reintroduce the question regarding old Jerry Clink.

"With respect to him," replied Mr. Lupton, "I am too sensible of his feelings, and the cause of them, to entertain against him any ideas of retaliation. My own security I must provide for; and so long as that can be ensured, I shall take no farther notice of the past. We had better on both sides avoid wronging each other any farther."

Colin expressed his hopes that everything might yet be accommodated in a manner which would leave all parties the happier for their forgiveness, and the wiser from the troubles they had undergone.

"It is hopeless," answered Mr. Lupton. "The man whose determination to have revenge can so vividly outlive the wear of so many years, is not, I am afraid, of a sufficiently ductile metal to be ever formed into a kinder shape. Unless some unforeseen circumstance should come between to reverse the present tendency of events, it is to me an evident truth, that either that old man or I will eventually prove the death of the other."

This opinion he uttered in such a prophetic tone, as left upon the mind of his hearer an impression which all his own hopes to the contrary were insufficient to eradicate.

CHAPTER III.

Wherein Peter Veriquear makes love to Miss Sowersoft, and becomes involved in trouble.—Mr. Palethorpe's reconciliation with his mistress.

IN pursuance of a design which our hero had secretly formed, involving a journey to Sherwood Forest, and the carrying off of James Woodruff, he one afternoon might have been seen wending his way toward his old quarters in Bethnal Green. The co-operation of some one, a stranger to Jerry, and in whom entire confidence could be placed, was imperatively required in its execution; and, in lack of a better man, Colin selected his old employer, Mr. Peter Veriquear.

On arriving at his domicile, our hero found that Peter was from home, having taken advantage of a fine day to convey his small family in the cradle-coach to a favourite suburban retreat, for the enjoyment of tea and toying, not far from the tower at Canonbury.

In this, and similar places about the environs of the metropolis, it is that on fine warm summer afternoons, especially on Sundays, the shop-tired and *counter-sunk* inhabitants of the respectable working classes assemble, ostensibly for the purpose of imbibing what by courtesy is dignified with the title of fresh air, though with equally as settled an intention of mixing the said fresh air with bottled stout, three X ales, and a pipe or two of bird's-eye.

As our hero entered the tea-gardens in question, he passed beneath a low and long colonnade, the top of which was formed by the projection of the second story of the building. Several miniature conveyances for the small aristocracy of the baby generation stood about, and among them that identical one on which Colin had himself once exercised his abilities.

To the left lay a lawn, on which some score or two of youngsters were disporting themselves in the twilight, while the "parents and guardians" of these small gentry wereolling in certain arbours, made waterproof with pitch, which bounded the sides of the green.

In one of these Colin found the individual of whom he was in search. Having communicated to Peter some general idea that his assistance was required in a very important enterprise,

"True," replied Veriquear, "it may be of great consequence to you; but that, you know, is no business of mine."

"But you will be well rewarded afterward," replied Colin.

"Oh, in that case, it begins to look more like my own affair than I thought. Good pay makes a thing a man's business directly."

And hereupon the matter was discussed in a manner which proved that, upon sufficient reason, Peter could take as much interest in other people's business as ever he had taken in his own.

While Colin sat in discourse with his old employer, his attention had several times been attracted by a voice in the next arbour, but which now elevated itself to a distinctly audible pitch.

"Upon my word, those little dears are delightful to look on! The satisfaction of having children to bring up—ay, dear!—the delight, Mr. Palethorpe, of doing exactly as one likes with them—leading them as it

were by the nose, symbolically speaking—washing their little backs every morning, and feeding them all day like a nest of sparrows—oh! the delight of it must be—I hardly know what to call it—but something which, in an unmarried state, the imagination can scarcely soar up to. And then their tiny voices—ill-tempered people may call it squealing if they please—but to a father, I should think, it must be welcome night and day. It is astonishing how happy some people might be, if they did but take something of a determination at some time or other of their lives to adopt some course with respect to somebody or other, which might—what shall I say?—I mean, which might lead to something decisive.”

“Sartinly, meesis,” replied the individual thus addressed, “I don’t dispoot all that; only, when a man has a good appetite hisself, and can eat most of what’s put before him, it seems nat’ral enough that his children would go and do the same, and that would take a little more main-teaning than some of us can exactly afford. I can’t see myself how *we* could go all that length, with a proper eye to our own old age.”

“I don’t mean that!” exclaimed the lady; “you don’t understand me. I can only say it for myself, that it would be no trouble to me, not a bit of it, to sink the whole of myself in the endeavour to raise a prodigy of children, that should prove a complete honour to any farm-yard in the riding. The pretty dears! how I should spoil them! Ugh! I could squeeze their little hearts to pieces, I could!”

This rhapsody left Colin no longer in the dark. Mr. Palethorpe was again in London, accompanied by the loving and amiable Miss Sowersoft.

A capital idea at this moment struck our hero. Mr. Peter Veriquear was already acquainted with the story of Palethorpe’s previous visit to town, and had applauded Colin for the part he had taken in punishing that poor booby as he deserved. He therefore only required to be informed that Palethorpe and his mistress were in the next box, in order, as Colin hoped, to be induced to join him in a lark upon the worthy couple. His proposition was this—that Peter should walk into their arbour, sit down next to Miss Sowersoft, call for drink, as though he had just arrived, and then proceed, according to the best of his ability, in making love to that lady, no less to her own eventual disappointment, than to the annoyance of the redoubtable Samuel. Veriquear laughed at the notion, but objected that to make love to a lady could not possibly be any business of his.

“Besides,” he added, “what will Mrs. Veriquear say if she should happen to catch me, for I expect her up to tea very soon; and if she *should* come before the joke is completed, I am afraid she would turn it into a regular Whitechapel tragedy.”

“Oh, never heed that!” replied Colin. “I’ll be bound to see you safe. Go directly, and do it before the chance be lost. Here, waiter!” and he whispered to him to carry a bottle of stout into the next box for his friend.

In a few minutes Veriquear was sitting beside Miss Sowersoft, while Colin peeped through a nick in the boards, and observed all that passed.

“A fine evening, ma’am,” said Peter.

“Delightful evening, indeed, sir!” echoed Miss Maria.

“Yees, it’s pleasant,” added Sammy, who remembered his former exploits, and began to fear a thief; at the same time he thought it most advisable to speak civilly.

“Admirable places these,” continued Peter, “for the enjoyment of the working-people, who are confined in shops from week’s end to week’s end.”

"They are, indeed," said Miss Sowersoft.

"I should think so," added Palethorpe.

"And, really," continued the lady, "I had not the most remote conception that such places existed."

"Then you are strangers here, ma'am?" asked Peter.

"Quite so, sir!" answered the lady. "We have only been up a few days."

"I am't a stranger, though," protested Palethorpe; "I've bin afore, and know what's what as well as most folks. He'd be a sharper chap than somebody that I see to drop on us."

Miss Sowersoft here gave Sammy a nudge, and squeezed her mouth into a severe expression of reprehension. In the meantime Peter looked very graciously at the lady, who seemed by no means displeased with his attentions, and continued a conversation, in which he prognosticated how many sights she would see in London, and how much she would be delighted before her return: concluding with an obscure hint that it would give him much pleasure to point out the objects best worthy attention. Miss Sowersoft smirked benignantly, and glanced at Palethorpe with an expression which seemed to say that "somebody might now see that everybody did not think so little of somebody else, as some people were apt to imagine." While Palethorpe himself grew paler, and began to think that his "meesis" was going to be taken, without farther ceremony, altogether out of his hands.

Encouraged by his success, Peter so far increased his attentions as fairly to arouse the jealousy of Mr. Palethorpe, who resented the insult by declaring that, as that lady was keeping company with himself, nobody else should speak to her so long as he was by, or else his name was not Palethorpe. To which valiant speech Miss Sowersoft herself replied by informing Sammy that he was one of those people who seemed as if they could neither make up their own minds to come to a central and decisive point themselves, nor endure to see anybody else do the same. A sentiment which Mr. Veriquear rendered still more illustrative by declaring that the gentleman was like one of those ill-tempered curs that turn up their own noses at a bone, but snarl at every other dog that attempts to touch it.

Finding even his own "meesis" against him, Sammy's mettle began to rise, and he demanded to know whether Mr. Veriquear meant to call him a cur? To which Veriquear replied that he would look still more like one if he went upon all-fours. Hereupon Mr. Palethorpe challenged his antagonist to a boxing-match upon the green, swearing that he would lick him as clean as ever any man was licked in this world. Peter ridiculed this threat, and begged the gentleman who made it to recollect that he was not now in Yorkshire; informing him still farther that, if he did not take particular care, he would lay himself under the unpleasant necessity of making another appearance at the police-office, as he had done upon a former occasion. Sammy turned pale; while Miss Maria seemed astounded, as she demanded, in a shrill and faint, but earnest voice, "whether he (Mr. Veriquear) *knew* Mr. Palethorpe and his calamity."

"Everybody in London knows him," replied Veriquear; "and I assure you, ma'am, that it is no credit to a respectable female to be seen with a man who has rendered himself so notorious."

Afraid that she had committed herself in the eyes of the metropolis,

Miss Sowersoft looked upon the unlucky Samuel with momentary horror, and at the same time unconsciously clung for support to the strange hand of that poor man's supposed rival. At this interesting part of the scene, Mrs. Veriquear, (directed by Master William, whom she had picked up on the lawn,) bounced into the box.

Colin, whose business it was to have prevented this surprise, had been so engaged in spying through a hole, which he had made by pushing a knot out of one of the boards, that the appearance of Mrs. Veriquear confounded him, especially when he beheld that lady, who instantly detected her husband's situation, dart like a fury at Miss Sowersoft, and pommel away with her fists as might some belated baker, who has the largest amount of dough to knead up within the least possible length of time. Sammy and Veriquear were instantly in arms—the latter endeavouring to restrain his wife, the former, with a chivalrous feeling peculiar to himself, striking her upon the face; while Master William, seeing the danger of his parents, struck up a solo in the highest possible key.

No sooner did Colin perceive the conduct of Sammy than he forsook his situation at the peep-hole, and hurrying into the field, laid his old foe flat with a well-directed blow. The latter looked up from his inglorious situation; and if ever man felt convinced that he was haunted by an evil genius, Mr. Palethorpe felt so on this occasion, and that *his* evil genius was Colin Clink.

A regular *melée* now ensued, during which Mrs. Veriquear's cap was sent into the air, like a balloon. The back of the arbour was driven out, and Mr. Veriquear, locked in the arms of Miss Sowersoft, fell through the opening into that beautiful piece of water which has its local habitation opposite the west side of Canonbury Tower.

The sudden appearance of several policemen put an end to the sport. Colin and Sammy were seized, and attempted to be hurried off; but as neither had any particular reasons for desiring a situation in the watch-house, they contrived so far to accommodate matters as to be allowed to go each his separate way.

Our hero's first step was to see to the safety of his friend. He and Miss Sowersoft had already been fished out by the spectators. The latter-named of the two was conveyed into the tavern, and put to bed, while the former was induced, at the representation of Colin, to walk rapidly home with the enraged Mrs. Veriquear on his arm, our hero himself undertaking charge of the young Veriquears, and drawing them in the basket-coach behind.

Peter Veriquear naturally enough employed the whole time occupied in their journey by explaining the adventure; a statement which Colin so far corroborated, as to leave Mrs. Veriquear convinced of her husband's innocence.

As to the appearance of the worthy couple in town within so short a time of Mr. Palethorpe's former expedition, it is to be accounted for upon the same principle as are many other matters of equal importance; that is, according to a certain principle of curiosity, which is supposed to exist pretty largely in every human breast, but especially in the bosoms of the fair.

During the first day or two after her discovery of Sammy's frail nature, she betook herself, as far as the duties of the farm would allow, to the solitude of her own bed-chamber; where, in all probability, she wept

regretfully over the depravity of human nature. For some weeks Mr. Palethorpe lived as though he lived not. To her, at least, he was dead : she saw him not, heard him not, knew him not. When he spoke his voice passed her by like the wind : when he whistled she heeded it no more than the whistling of a key-hole. Meantime Samuel ate and drank unheeded, and with a degree of violence which seemed to say that by these means he meditated a novel species of suicide. If so, however, the thing failed in its effect. So far from entering at death's door, he seemed every day to get farther off. While Miss Maria pined, he grew fatter, redder, and more robustious. The contrast, at length, became unendurable ; and from mere spite she at last began to speak to him again.

From a sulky exchange of words, this happy pair at length proceeded to a certain reluctant but animated discourse, in which explanation, reproaches, and deprecation, were abundantly resorted to. She accused ; he apologized and regretted, and at length she forgave, and Mr. Palethorpe had the satisfaction of finding himself restored to favour, and his mistress's arms.

I have said that Miss Sowersoft's curiosity was extreme. When Sammy detailed to her all the wonders of his expedition, her propensity could not be restrained. She, too, must see London. Accordingly, the tour was agreed upon, and hence their appearance at the time and place in question.

Returning to our hero, it may now be stated that, before Mr. Clink took his departure from Mr. Veriquear's, a plan was arranged between himself and Peter for carrying his important design into immediate execution.

CHAPTER IV.

Introduces certain new characters upon the stage, and among them the real heroine of this history. Besides containing a love-story far superior to the last.

WHILE the loves of Miss Sowersoft and Mr. Palethorpe yet leave their tender impress on the mind, let me take advantage of the opportunity to mention another delicate matter which has been making some progress, although no allusion has been hitherto made to it.

Notwithstanding the little amours in which our hero has been engaged, it must have been evident that the opportunity which promised the most appropriate match for him had not yet arrived. Toward Fanny, it is true, he had never entertained any love, nor professed any ; on that unfortunate girl herself lay all the pain of having nourished an affection for one who was insensible of it : while, with respect to Miss Wintlebury, not only had she herself withdrawn from his knowledge, but the altered circumstances in which he was placed by Mr. Lupton could scarcely fail to influence him in his decisions upon this important point.

While in this uncertainty, Mr. Lupton had taken an opportunity of introducing him to one Mr. Henry Calvert, a gentleman of fortune, residing in the suburbs of London, and in whose family he soon found—as his father had secretly desired—a companion much after the heart of any young man of sense and sensibility. This was Miss Jenny Calvert, the youngest of two sisters, and within a year or two of his own age. Well-educated, sensible, and good-tempered, she was one of those creatures who, as they grow up, become unconsciously the life and light of the

household. To whom parents, brothers, and sisters—all instinctively look up; one of those happy things that would be most missed if taken away; but who was least felt while present, save in the quiet and gentle sense of unobtrusive happiness which her presence ever occasioned. She was sufficiently tall to give dignity to an elegant figure, while a brilliant complexion, associated with hair and eyes of a hue which nature had coloured in admirable correspondence, gave no fairer a representation exteriorly than the soul within deserved.

Miss Jenny had seen our hero but few times before she became conscious that, happy as she was, she might yet be happier. Up to this time she had never dreamed of love beyond the circle of her own home: now she felt that loveable creatures exist out in the world, that the heart is capable of other affection than that of parents, sisters, and brothers: and that such may become too necessary to its happiness, ever to be happy without it.

Her family lived in that quiet retirement which sought not the excitement of company to enable them to get through life without *ennui*. A tasteful home afforded them higher pleasures than the conventional affections of happiness which occupy so much of that class in which they might have shone conspicuous. But Mr. Calvert was too much a man of mind to precipitate his family into the whirl of fashionable life. At the risk of having his daughters neglected, and his sons regarded as "unlike what one expects young men would be," he preferred to all other pleasures that pure domestic training, and quiet attention to his estate, which never fails to produce real happiness. Hence, his daughters had never been carried to market, neither had his two sons any knowledge of those vices which, though they might have added to their character as young men of spirit, could not have done them credit on any other account.

This happy family found abundant recreation in an admirably selected library, as well as amusement in an extensive garden, which enclosed the house on three sides, and threw a quiet air of English comfort over the scene.

With such a man, and in a family with such an attraction, it is not to be wondered at that Colin soon found himself happier than ever.

Happiness, however, especially in love, seems, like sunlight in the world, as too bright to endure without intervals of shade. Not long had Colin and Jenny been acquainted; they had just learned to speak confidently, and to tell each other those thoughts which before had been stifled, when our hero was astonished to find in the behaviour of Mr. Calvert a marked difference from that which hitherto he had pursued toward him. It was not less kind, but seemed marked by regret, as though the bosom in which it originated felt like that of a friend, who knows that he *must* part—not that he wishes to do so. Miss Jenny, too, seemed downcast. And sometimes, when her father chanced to catch a glance of her countenance, he would find those pretty eyes wet, as if the well-spring within would overflow in spite of her. Did he ask what was the matter, she smiled, and replied, "Nothing;" but instantly would leave the room, thus telling there *was* something, though something not to be told.

These things, it was observed by Colin, first occurred after Mr. Lupton and Mr. Calvert had had an interview; during which, he now felt little doubt, his union with Jenny had been discussed.

Still it was not easy to imagine the cause of this difference. All that

he knew was, that all the family, with the exception of Roger Calvert, even Jenny herself—and that was worst of all—conducted themselves in a manner which left little doubt that some cause appeared to render the continuance of his acquaintance with the young lady unadvisable. Still there was no offensive carriage from any party.

One day, as he was rambling with Roger, the most open-hearted friend he had in the family, Colin mentioned the subject, and ventured to ask the cause of this coldness.

"Perhaps," replied Roger, "I am not doing right by telling you—though, for my own part, I think you ought to know. But, since you require me to name the reason, I will. Mark, however, that I do not agree in the opinion; nor do I see how we, at all events, ought to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children."

Conviction flashed on Colin's mind. His cheek became pale, then red; he would have burst into tears had not his pride forbidden.

"I told you," continued Roger, "that I did not know whether it was right to tell you; but I am no keeper of secrets. Frankly I tell you, it is owing to the story of your birth, which your father told to mine some days ago, with all he meant to do for you, that there might be no misunderstanding between the families. My father and mother like you; as for myself, I think you a good-hearted fellow, and should have no objection to your wedding Jenny; but their notions are not mine. I assure you it is nothing else; for though such a match would be equal to anything Jenny could expect, as Mr. Lupton volunteered to give you a handsome fortune; yet, with them, especially with my mother, it is a sort of matter of conscience, which cannot readily be overcome. Yet it is the source of a deal of grief to them, especially as Jenny seems to have taken a liking to you. However, I can only say this, that if I were in your place, and in love with any young lady, I would make up my mind to have her, and HAVE HER I WOULD."

In this strange speech Colin saw at once the cause of all his fear, combined with something which yet inspired hope. Surely he could not fail with perseverance, and the assistance of such a spirited auxiliary as Roger.

That same night, as he was on the eve of departure for the liberation of Woodruff, our hero obtained an interview with the lady of his heart. It was about eight in the evening, when this unhappy couple walked along the garden, in view of Mr. Calvert's house. It was a soft, autumnal night; while an increasing moon seemed to sail, like a lone wreck, among white and billowy clouds. Jenny leaned more lovingly, he thought, upon his arm than ever; and during some minutes they paced to and fro, without either venturing to speak. At length that meaning silence became insupportable. Colin stopped, and bent his face earthward, as he said,

"Young lady, there is no farther occasion for disguise. I know all. We must part—and for ever. I am thought unworthy of you; but I will not render myself so by persisting in attentions which even she to whom they are offered thinks proper to reject."

"Oh! no—do not say so!" exclaimed Miss Calvert. "It is not so, indeed!"

"I speak," replied Colin, "from what I have seen. I *have*—I do love you. The rest you know as well as I."

"In truth," answered Jenny, "I know nothing. Only a few days ago, I thought we were so happy, and now—" A flow of tears told the painful difference between then and now.

"You know nothing?" demanded Colin.

"Nothing, I assure you," answered his companion.

"Then why shun me?"

"My father," sobbed the lady, "told me I must forget you."

"And you will do so?"

"I must *try*, for it is my duty."

"But will you?—can you?"

"Oh! if you love me, do not ask me. I ought not to say it. But I feel—yes, dear Colin, I feel that what they demand is impossible."

If ever the reader has been in love, he or she must be aware that a climax of feeling of the kind described is not arrived at without involving ulterior consequences of a physical nature, which philosophers designate by the verb *to kiss*. It must, therefore, be understood that no sooner had Miss Calvert expressed the sentiments here recorded, than our hero, with becoming alacrity, converted that verb into a substantive. This experiment had never been tried between them before; but as Colin made it a rule to act according to the proverb that "what is worth doing, is worth doing well," I am happy in having to record that it perfectly succeeded. Declarations of eternal attachment were afterward repeated, and vows of love made, such as Diana, who was listening over their heads, hath seldom heard excelled. Mr. Clink and the lady eventually tore themselves asunder, with the understanding that neither would ever love another so long as the moon continued to shine or the seasons to change.

CHAPTER V.

Relates one of the best adventures in which Colin Clink has yet signalized himself.

The sun was setting behind the westward extreme of Sherwood forest; when Jerry Clink, silent and alone, might have been seen sitting by the door of a sort of half hut, half cavern, in a dell, down in the heart of the waste, far below those horizontal lines of light that now only tinged the tops of the higher hills. By his side stood a pitcher containing his favourite compound, and out of his mouth ascended in spires the smoke of the immortal herb; beside him lay a heap of bright purple heath, which he had cut during the day. The old man looked the personification of solitary enjoyment; a being to whom cloud and mountain were as friends. Solitude had no pain for him; day no pleasures, nor night any fears. The crow that flew overhead would caw as it cast an eye downward, and saw him below; and the cuckoo utter his notes from the tree closest upon his habitation. He never molested them, but seemed, as it were, a part of the wild nature around him. A tame jackdaw, that hopped and chattered about his dwelling, was the only sound he heard there, save only one, human voice, that sometimes cried in complaint or pain from a part of the cavern behind—that of James Woodruff.

As Jerry sat thus, sipping, smoking, or talking to his saucy jackdaw, which had now perched itself on the point of one of his toes, the figure of a man, half seen among the heath, appeared at a distance, winding a devious path among the irregularities of the ground; anon he would stand still, and look around, as though irresolute which course to pursue. Jerry watched a long time, but at length lost sight of him, owing to the broken nature of the earth, and the approach of night. As darkness fell

upon the world, Jerry retired into his hut : and having lit an oil lamp, which shed as much light as might have been comprised within the circumference of a tolerably sized table, he sat down, with a huge pair of spectacles on, to the perusal of apparently the only book on the premises. Well nigh had he read himself to sleep when the phenomenon of a rap at the door was heard.

Were some learned gentleman meditating in his study, suddenly to receive a clout beside the head from an unseen hand, he could not start with more abruptness than did Jerry, on hearing that unusual summons. Throwing the door wide open, he beheld the spare figure of a man before him.

"Well ! what do you want here ?" gruffly demanded Jerry.

"I'm lost in the forest," replied the stranger ; "and should thank you to direct me elsewhere, or give me shelter."

"No !" interrupted Jerry, "I shall have nobody here."

And he was about to shut the door in Mr. Peter Veriquear's face, had not that gentleman made it his business to clap his foot against it : Jerry flew into a towering passion, and with a fearful oath threatened to run his knife through him if he did not give way immediately. Peter replied that he had no intention to affront him, or to force himself into the house of any man who did not think it his duty to admit him ; but at the same time he appealed to him as a Christian to give him shelter. Jerry denied that he was a Christian, and swore that no man should ever cross his threshold—especially at that time of night. Saying which, he kicked Mr. Veriquear's shins, and set him dancing an original hornpipe of his own composition, while old Clink slammed to the door, and bolted it.

Here seemed an end to be put to the stratagem of which Mr. Veriquear was deputed to carry out the first part. The plan had been, that Peter should introduce himself to Jerry as a travelling merchant who had lost himself. That he should contrive to learn the localities of the place ; and during the night, while Jerry was asleep, open the door to Colin and Roger Calvert, who should be waiting not far off, in readiness to take advantage of the opportunity at once to secure old Jerry, and effect the liberation of James Woodruff without disturbance. But as Jerry's caution had rendered this design ineffective at its commencement, Peter had no other course to pursue but to wait in the neighbourhood of the cottage until such time as his confederates should come up, and other modes of operation be devised.

Accordingly he selected as comfortable a spot as the ground would admit within sight of the hut, where he crouched among the heath, and waited until at length he heard some village church-clock strike twelve. In the stillness it seemed as though that sound might have been heard across an infinite space ; but it was the more welcome to Peter's ears as the signal time which had been agreed upon for the appearance of his associates. Shortly he discerned indistinctly two figures cautiously approaching, and apparently on the look-out for their preconcerted signal. Peter arose, and advanced to meet them. It was with some difficulty at first he prevented their retreating, as thinking they were discovered ; but, having contrived to make himself known, they approached, and heard with dismay the story of his ineffectual attempt to get admitted within Jerry's cottage.

Under these circumstances, how to get in without disturbing the inmate

was the question. They had come on a ticklish enterprise, and to remain in the neighbourhood long might excite so much suspicion as would render their efforts nugatory. It was not, therefore, advisable to delay; while the daring spirit incident to young men incited them to an attempt, which the more sober Veriquear considered rash in the extreme.

The hut which Jerry inhabited being built up at, and partly within, the mouth of a rock-hole, its roof reached scarcely so high as the ground behind, while a chimney of wood and clay rose some twelve inches above it at one end. Having taken as accurate observation as the darkness of the night would permit, Colin proposed that all three should descend the chimney—himself taking the lead—with as much silence as possible, in order to surprise the old man while asleep. This done, a light was to be procured; and either by promises, threats, or search, the place in which poor Woodruff was imprisoned could then be discovered. Although Mr. Veriquear at first objected that it was a sweep's business, not his, to go down chimneys, yet he eventually agreed to Colin's proposition, on the condition that himself should be the last to descend, in order that the chimney might be swept, and his clothes saved for him by those who went before.

Accordingly our hero, as a preliminary caution, crept upon the moss-grown roof, and placing his head over the top of the chimney, listened. The light and fire, according to Peter's statement, had long been put out, but the air of the funnel was yet hot and sulphureous. It would be a stifling undertaking to get down; although the shortness of the distance to the fire-place promised but a brief continuance to the struggle. As Colin attentively listened he distinctly heard old Jerry snoring; and at every inspiration growling not unlike some jealous bull-dog when just aroused to the consciousness that his master's property is about to be invaded. Still he listened.—Could it be? Yes, distinctly he heard the voice of

“A soul that prayed in agony,
Miserere Domine!”

He heard in that awful midnight silence the whisperings of poor Woodruff to his God, for freedom, and for patience until that freedom came! That sound wrought upon his brain like madness; it nerved him doubly for his enterprise, and urged him to effect his object or perish in the attempt. His sense of justice overcame every other consideration; and all the anticipated delights of his future life, when, with Jenny Calvert as a happy wife by his side, he should perhaps walk the lord of Bramleigh manor, vanished before the determination to set poor Fanny's father free, or die.

Having arranged with his companions that they should follow, and taken off his boots to prevent noise, he crept cautiously into the chimney. After considerable trouble, and many pauses in order to assure himself that Jerry continued in slumber, Colin landed with his feet one on each side the fire-place, and thence stealthily crept down upon the floor. The whole place seemed as dark as though he had been sightless; and every movement required to be made with that slowness and care as should render noise impossible even in case he should meet with any obstacle in his endeavours to gain the open portion of the apartment. Woodruff's voice was now still. Perhaps he had sunk to the silence of despair, unthinking that Providence had that moment sent him a deliverer.

But, though Colin heard nothing of Mr. Woodruff, the busy tongue of old Jerry began to prate in his sleep unconnected words against some one who had offended him, that turned our hero cold with horror. Had Jerry been awake, and uttered such knowingly, little would it have affected him. But asleep—the body in its time of rest, jabbering thus of horrors; it seemed as though some evil spirit was speaking, through the mouth of a corpse, the language of a darker world.

As he stood thus listening, Colin found that his friend Roger had reached the hearthstone. Gradually they groped their way, directed by the nasal music which the old man played, close to his bed-side, without disturbing him. Scarcely were they so stationed ere a noise in the chimney, loud enough to have awakened the seven sleepers, frightened old Jerry from his pillow. In a clumsy attempt to make his descent, Peter had so far lost all foothold that nothing remained to support him but his hands, by which he hung from the chimney-top. This, not being of sufficient material to support so weighty a personage, gave way at once. Peter fell with his feet plump into the ashes, which flew up in a cloud that almost choked him, while a very uncomfortable quantity of rubbish fell upon his head from the funnel-top.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to tell two circumstances at the same moment; or I should have informed my reader before, that simultaneously with the fall of Mr. Veriquear was the up-springing of Jerry Clink. With the sudden and desperate energy of a giant, with which the circumstance of being so awakened supplied him, he leaped from his bed; and in all probability would have been the next instant on his feet, had it not happened that the suddenness of his spring allowed him not time to recollect a heavy beam, which projected above him. Against this he chanced to strike his head with a violence that sent him back insensible before his lips had power to utter a cry. Our adventurers immediately proceeded to take advantage of the circumstance.

Peter Veriquear still stood within the grate, ready to ascend again in case his disaster had rendered such a step advisable; but as his feet had stirred up the ashes, Colin observed a few live coals yet glimmering at the bottom. These he contrived to blow into sufficient heat to light a piece of half-burnt stick that chanced to lie on the hearth; and in the next moment the room was illuminated. The first step was to light a candle on the table, the next to see to the security of old Jerry. Peter now descended from his situation, considerably shaken, though otherwise unhurt, the only complaint he made being that it was the builder's business to have constructed the chimney-top more solidly, and then it would never have been any concern of his to have tumbled down it.

On proceeding to the bed our hero found Jerry lying with his white hair covered with blood, and himself senseless. Under all circumstances, there was no time to be thrown away. He left, therefore, his friend Roger and Mr. Veriquear to patch the old man's head with his own shirt, at the same time instructing them to secure him the moment he might revive, while he himself went in search of the den where Woodruff was confined. As the best guide to this, he demanded in a loud voice,

"Mr. Woodruff!—where are you?—where are you?"

There was no reply. Again he repeated the words, but in a state of feeling which left him almost unconscious of all he said.

"Here—here I am!" at length was answered, in a melancholy tone,

from a place far back, and apparently beyond a door of small dimensions, fastened into the rock, and bound with iron.

Colin flew to the spot. The door was as fast as the rock it was built in. He strove to burst it, but with as little effect as rain might beat against a precipice. Almost in a phrensy of excitement he rushed back, and searched the whole cottage for the key. He found it under Jerry's pillow. That strange being was still insensible, and had much the appearance of a corpse.

Colin hastened again to the door—he inserted the key—he turned it. A damp sweat stood upon his brow. He dashed the door open, and beheld James Woodruff standing with his hands chained together before him.

"You are free!" cried Colin, almost hysterically—"You are free!"

Poor James looked at him doubtfully, and replied,

"Do not play with me. It is cruel to trifle with sorrow like mine."

"You are free!" again cried Colin. "Come forth!—you are free!"

James looked at him as though those deep black eyes would pierce his very soul, and asked,

"Is it—is it TRUE?"

"It is!" exclaimed Colin.

Poor Woodruff placed his hand upon his forehead, as though those words had planted insanity where reason was before. When he removed it again, his eyes were fixed on Colin. He staggered toward him with the feebleness of a child—stretched out his arms—strove to speak—failed—strove a second time, and a second time he found no words. At last he *struck*, as might a woman, and fell on his face in a swoon.

It would be unnecessary to detail the circumstances that afterward took place. Suffice it to state, that Mr. Woodruff was raised, and placed on the bottom of Jerry Clink's bed; that a bottle of the old man's Geneva was discovered in a cupboard, and brought forth, in order that a portion of it might be applied in the restoration of the poor captive.

This purpose achieved, Mr. Woodruff sat up, and looking wildly about him, again asked doubtfully if it really were true that he was free! Our hero eagerly assured him that he was among friends, who would take care that no harm should again befall him. He reminded him that he himself was that same Colin Clink who had once before concerted a plan for his escape; entreated him to be calm; gave him the fullest assurances that all his troubles were now at an end, and that he should be conveyed to a place where his enemies should never touch him again. But poor James still seemed incredulous—lost in uncertainty, and scarcely decided whether to believe his senses, or to conclude that they had conspired with evil men to persuade him into the belief of a state which had no real existence. Colin informed him that the villain Rowel, his brother-in-law, was now in prison, so that nothing was to be feared from that quarter: while his friends would not only secure the liberty he at present possessed, but take steps to recover everything of which he and his daughter had been, during so long a period, dispossessed. At the name of his daughter James started—for the memory of her had not before, from over-excitement, awakened in his mind; but when he heard her name, tears gushed from his eyes, and he sobbed convulsively.

Colin knew that this passion would give relief, and therefore let his tears flow on.

Meantime, measures were adopted for an immediate evacuation of the premises. The night was advancing, and every advantage ought to be taken of the darkness. The chain was soon knocked off, while Jerry's long coat—that identical garment which we have seen him purchase in the Goswell Road—was forced on the late prisoner's back, in order to enable him to resist that open air to which he was now so unaccustomed.

It must not be supposed that during this time old Jerry had been neglected. While precautions to prevent any violence on his recovery were carefully adopted, his condition yet demanded attention. Every means had been used to bring him to a state of sensibility, and at length their efforts had the desired effect. The old man opened his eyes, at first gradually, but at length turned them in piercing scrutiny on the people about him. When he saw Veriquear, who held firmly one of his feet down upon the mattress, the self-same stranger he had that night turned from his door—when he beheld his own grandson standing at his head, and James Woodruff himself sitting free at the foot of the bed—then old Jerry made an effort to get up; but the exertion caused his wound to burst out afresh—he fell back, deeply cursing all around him, and became again insensible.

Whatever might be Colin's opinion of the old man's deserts, it was not by any means in accordance with his feelings to leave him in this state alone, whatever advantages it might afford him for making a safe retreat. He therefore begged Roger and Veriquear to use their utmost exertions in restoring him to permanent consciousness before they took their departure. Accordingly, after some trouble, he was a second time brought round; and when in a fit state to be questioned, Colin told him what their purpose had been, and demanded to know whether, if they left him at liberty, he would agree neither to follow, nor to give any alarm?—observing at the same time, that unless he would consent to this, he should find himself under the necessity of tying him down to his own bedstead, and so leaving him. On this, Jerry fell to cursing in a manner truly fearful, and declared that he would follow them wherever they went, as long as he had strength. Nay, he declared that, if possible, he would track their footsteps as a spirit, after his body had dropped dead, as it might do, upon the road.

Finding argument useless, Colin at length determined to set out, trusting to the old man's bodily condition for security against pursuit, without restoring to any coercive measures for detaining him.

Accordingly, a short time found Mr. Woodruff and his three friends on the forest, tracking their way in the dark, northward; while Jerry Clink, in a state bordering on delirium, rolled himself out of bed after their departure, with a resolution to make his way up to the house of Rowel's brother, and give the alarm.

CHAPTER VI.

“WHITHER are we bound?” demanded Woodruff.

“To Kiddal Hall. My father, Mr. Lupton, charged me, in case we succeeded, to convey you there. I have provided a vehicle at a village over the forest: the moment we reach it, fear will be at an end.”

The night was dark, but clear and fresh. A healthy breeze swept across, and sighed through the trees.

"How I thank Heaven for this!" exclaimed Woodruff, "and you, friendly strangers, whom I can never compensate, for the delight I feel in this liberty is beyond estimation."

He stretched his hands to heaven, and sunk upon his knees, while our friends stood silently by until he had poured out his heart in thankfulness. Fearful of lingering, Colin used his influence to urge him onward, or he would have remained in this ecstasy of adoration. Accustomed to darkness, the night suited him; individual flowers and leaves, which to his companions were fused into masses, he could see with separate distinctness; he plucked them with the eager delight of a child.

This excitement and the unaccustomed exertion overcame him, after they had traversed two or three miles, and, notwithstanding his endeavours, Woodruff became incapable of proceeding. Under these circumstances, Calvert and Veriquear volunteered to carry him, a task which they performed, while Colin lingered behind to ascertain whether old Jerry had contrived to give any alarm.

This precaution proved not needless. As he crouched down, to bring the ground into a line horizontal with the sky, so as to enable him to detect whatever objects might present themselves, he fancied he beheld moving figures. Hereupon Colin requested his friends to hurry forward, while he remained to reconnoitre. His suspicion proved just. The figures rapidly advanced, until he could distinctly discern five men, one of whom he instantly recognised as Jerry. He was exclaiming passionately, calling down imprecations on his own head, for having disabled him from following with the expedition which otherwise he could have used. His doubts satisfied, Colin had nothing to do but hurry his companions onward. This, however, their burden in part prevented; and Mr. Woodruff became excited to an extreme, and begged of them rather to let him be killed in resisting, than ever again see those horrible walls. Every effort was made to pacify him; but his long-lost liberty was now so dear, that the thought of being a second time deprived of it made him tremble like an infant.

As the pursuing party gained upon them, Colin recommended that they should turn aside among the brush-wood, until the others should have passed; they soon found harbour beneath an elm, that bent down from a bank, at the foot of which lay a pool collected from the rains. While silently standing there, the parties approached, and the voice of Jerry could distinctly be heard, as he swore that he thought his skull was broken; while his discourse in other respects seemed to bespeak a disordered mind.

How the circumstance happened Colin never could distinctly ascertain; but scarcely were they congratulating themselves on the success of their stratagem, when a loud cry from Jerry Clink, accompanied by a wild rush upon them, announced their discovery. Mr. Woodruff had been seated against the bank, and before him the friends now stood, resolved to defend him to the last. A tremendous scuffle ensued, during which Calvert and Veriquear conducted themselves gallantly, and severely drubbed three of the assailants. Jerry, half frantic, yelled like a savage, till, in the confusion, the old man received from some unrecognised hand, whether friend or opponent was never known, another blow, which completed the work the former had left undone. He was seen to stand a moment, as though stunned; he tried to utter a curse upon him who had struck

the blow ; but exhausted nature refused the promptings of that *savage* spirit ; his tongue sunk for ever silenced, and old Jerry dropped suddenly upon his back—dead ! This event put a termination to the engagement. The body of Jerry was carried off by his associates, and those they had attacked were left to pursue their journey.

In due time the party arrived at the village, where the vehicle was provided, and they were driven off to the hall.

As for old Jerry, a coroner's inquest was subsequently held over his body, when the facts of his having met his death in the manner above described being clearly established, the usual verdict was returned. His corpse was committed to the ground, and the matter gradually subsided until it became forgotten.

Mr. Lupton was at the hall when the party arrived. There was also awaiting Mr. Colin a letter from Miss Jenny, which went far to destroy that pleasure which else he could not have failed to experience from the success of the enterprise. But, before this be commented on, it is necessary to record certain other little matters.

The story of Woodruff's liberation soon became known ; and as Rowel's imprisonment had created no little sensation, the presence of so important a character excited universal attention.

Colin caused a messenger to be despatched to Fanny Woodruff, for the purpose of informing her of the arrival of her father at the squire's mansion, and to appoint an hour when her meeting with him should take place, it being deemed advisable to allow some time to elapse before that meeting was permitted.

To recapitulate the circumstances attendant on that meeting forms no part of my design. It is enough to state, that the feelings of each were wrought up to the extreme ; and that night scarcely separated them without tears.

Some time after, when the condition of all parties would allow of it without pain, an entertainment upon a large scale was given at the hall, at which every one of the individuals most interested were present, besides a number of the neighbouring gentry, whose sympathies had been aroused in that story of persecution of which Mr. Woodruff had been the victim.

On this occasion it was that the blunt and honest Roger Calvert first became acquainted with Fanny Woodruff. They were sufficiently near the same age to constitute, in that respect, a proper match. Fanny was by no means deficient in personal attractions, which were rather heightened than depreciated, by the delicate character her features had assumed since she made the painful discovery that the affection she had felt for Colin would never be returned. Grief and anxiety had spiritualized her looks, and attached a degree of interest to her appearance which it did not possess before ; while the devotedness with which she watched her father conspired to stamp both her person and character with those requisites which recommend to the love of the discerning.

While Roger tarried at the hall, he had frequent opportunities of remarking her character. So favourably did these interviews affect his sensitive bosom, that it soon became evident he meditated liming his twigs to catch the pretty bird. And though at the outset Fanny exhibited a reluctance to be wooed, yet at length her heart relented ; she found, perhaps, in the disposition of Roger a better substitute for Colin than the

chance of a thousand might give her : as those two gentlemen were by no means opposite to each other. A reason this for listening with more early favour to his suit than she could have done to that of another. At the same time she heard Colin express himself in such terms of his friend, as could not fail to have considerable influence in predisposing her in his favour. Then, too, there was that strongest tie, gratitude for the part he had taken in restoring a parent whom she had lost. This amour caused Mr. Calvert to prolong his stay considerably ; combined as it was with the solicitations of Mr. Lupton, who would not think of permitting so early a departure to the son of one of his dearest friends.

Fanny, it is almost unnecessary to relate, had declined the duties of Sylvester's house. The leisure thus afforded was taken advantage of by Roger, whose attentions to his daughter were marked by Mr. Woodruff with pleasure, that gentleman feeling that no reward in his power to bestow could ever return the service rendered him. Still the greatest in his power to give, had he possessed worlds, would, in his estimation, have been the hand of so dear a child, with such a portion as would place her in ease for life.

Thus sanctioned by the smiles of her father, it is no wonder that her estimation for Roger daily grew more favourable, until at length she fairly yielded to receive him as an accepted lover.

With respect to Colin's mother, our hero seized the earliest opportunity to wait upon her with the assurance of his present happiness, as well as to convey to her a present of two hundred pounds. Mrs. Clink expressed herself in terms of satisfaction, but informed him that, as she could never enjoy a mother's highest delight and be a witness of her child's prosperity, it would be more congenial to her feelings to carry into execution a design she had formed of retiring to a distant part of the country, where, out of sight of all who might be to her, as she to them, a cause of unpleasant reflection, she could quietly pass the remaining portion of her life in humble endeavours to atone for the great error of her existence.

Colin wept over his mother. He saw too much good sense in her remarks to attempt to controvert them, although he strove as much as lay in his power to soften the asperity of the self-accusation with which they were intermingled. All he could promise was, that she should be made as happy as in this world we can hope to be ; and that he would omit nothing calculated to reconcile her to herself.

Not to return to this subject, it may here be stated that, before those final adventures were gone through which placed Colin at the summit of his happiness, Mrs. Clink carried out her views. She retired with a respectable sufficiency to a village in Derbyshire, where she dwelt in peaceful seclusion.

Let us begin with that communication from Miss Jenny previously adverted to. It ran as follows :

" Since Mr. Clink quitted our house my mother has had much to say to me. During your absence, it seems to have become fixed that I shall never be happy. She has expressed her desire that I would beg of you to forget me. I never slept, but cried, my dearest Colin, all night. I am very ill now, and can scarce do anything but weep. Were I of that religion which permits such things, I would go into a convent, where no eye could see how heart-broken a creature is so soon made of the wretched, but devotedly affectionate—J. C."

I cannot better describe the effect produced upon Colin by this epistle, than by stating that within ten minutes he formed a dozen different determinations to rescue the lady. He laid Miss Calvert's letter before her brother, who at once declared that were it his case he would run away with her at once.

This suggestion wonderfully coincided with Colin's state of feeling, and in all probability he would have done so within the shortest given space, had not an event occurred which for the present caused him to set his design aside. This was the arrival of Mrs. Lupton.

Colin chanced to be in the garden when the carriage drove up.

When it stopped, he saw that some lady descended from it, attended by two females, whose assistance appeared needful to enable her to walk into the house.

The sun shone brilliantly; and as her face was turned upward Colin saw her eyes were not tearless, nor her heart at peace.

Our hero felt no doubt that he saw Mrs. Lupton. Nor was he mistaken. As she entered the hall she regarded everything with that interest which any individual might be supposed to feel who, after many years, should turn over anew some record, wherein was shown the past as now being; save that it was a now which looked upon no future of possible joy, unless in that world which is beyond man's reach to darken or make sad.

As early after Mrs. Lupton's arrival as was consistent with the fatigue she had undergone, Mr. Lupton obtained an interview with her alone. In his communications of deep interest must have been made, as the services of Mrs. Lupton's attendants were required to save her from fainting, while the eyes of her husband betrayed that on his part their conversation had not been conducted without tears.

That same evening Mr. Lupton conducted Colin to his lady, and presented him with the remark, "This, madam, is the young man of whom I have spoken." A gentle inclination seemed to mark that she understood what was said, though her reply betrayed that the years which had elapsed since last we saw her had produced no permanent restoration of the then partly overthrown mind. She looked at Colin without emotion; and though she had never seen him before, remarked—

"Yes; I remember that face as well—nay, better than any other; though it is more than twenty years since I saw it."

It has already been remarked that Colin bore a strong resemblance to the squire.

"And when," she continued, "shall I see it again!—Never! It went from me soon after I was wed."

"Pray be calm," interposed Mr. Lupton, in a kind tone. "We will talk these matters over some future time."

"And this favour," continued Mrs. Lupton, "I beg particularly—I would have no one put me out of this house any more. I will endure everything patiently, and soon get out of the way, where no man's snares shall ravel me again."

Under the painful circumstance of this temporary alienation Mr. Lupton and Colin retired, leaving the unfortunate lady in the hands of her attendants, one of whom was her old companion, Miss Shirley.

After a few days, when Colin was again introduced to her, Mrs. Lupton had recovered her self-possession, and comprehended certain arrangements

which Mr. Lupton had mentioned to her touching that young man. In these she quietly acquiesced, not because she felt any interest in them, but simply because her husband had proposed them. At the same time, while his every wish was hers, personally she felt that indifference not unusual with individuals who regard themselves as hopeless here, and, consequently, contemplate the world to come as their only place of refuge.

Whether this feeling was accelerated by an event which shortly after happened, and which, happily perhaps, put an end to all Mrs. Lupton's earthly sorrows, I will not pretend to divine; although it has been asserted, that the nearness of death will often produce exhibitions of feeling, as regards this world, never so fully made under other circumstances. It is not for the compiler of this history to speculate on such a subject; and, therefore, the reader must here be informed, that, now Mrs. Lupton's faculties had returned, she strenuously opposed—notwithstanding what we have previously recorded—the marriage of her young friend, Miss Calvert, with the hero of this book. On that one question only did she evince the least interest; but no sooner was she aware that he was the object of that affection which had caused Miss Calvert so much trouble, than she retired to her room and addressed a letter to her.

The same post which placed it in Miss Calvert's hand, conveyed to her two others:—one from Colin, and the other from her brother Roger. Colin's contained all those passionate appeals which might have been expected. Judging from this epistle, Colin was in a state of desperation; and it concluded by expressing his determination never to relinquish his suit, though even Jenny herself should be induced to resist his addresses.

This spirited production at first inspired poor Jenny with momentary hope; more especially as she found, on opening her brother's letter, that he also advised her by no means to sacrifice her own happiness.

His remarks in some degree counteracted the bitterness of those which made her weep over Mrs. Lupton's letter, although they served to assist her in drawing a correct conclusion as to the cause of objection that her father saw in the parentage of Mr. Clink, the bar to their union.

How long Jenny grieved I need not say, but grieve she did, until some that had known her slightly knew her not again; and those who had known her best became most certain that if this was suffered to continue, a light heart was for ever exchanged for a sad one, and the creature whose presence had diffused happiness was converted into one of those melancholy beings over whose mind seems to have settled an everlasting cloud. Then it was that the obstinate began to soften. Everybody loved Jenny, and grieved to see her grief. So at length they proceeded, from the exertion of counter-influences upon her, to the tacitly understood holding out of hope that matters might yet be arranged.

Meanwhile, as the squire's object in introducing his son to Mrs. Lupton had been fulfilled, Colin took the earliest opportunity to return to London. But before we follow him, the reader will, perhaps, be pleased to hear something respecting certain other characters, to whose interest, he it hoped, he does not feel indifferent.

In order that the charge brought against Rowel, of having been guilty of the murder of Skinwell, might be substantiated, Mr. Lupton had not omitted any means likely to conduce to that end; not the least important

of which was the disinterment of the deceased's coffin in the churchyard of Bramloigh. This was undertaken with quietness; and a careful examination would, doubtless, have taken place, had it not been discovered, to everybody's amazement, on opening the grave, that somebody had been there before, and the corpse was gone. This fact was no sooner ascertained than speculations innumerable started into existence; and strange stories were published of lights having been seen in the churchyard after dark; of the sound of a spade having been heard there in the dead of night—though when heard, or what favoured mortal had heard it, could not be precisely made out.

The things, however, ended as such things usually do, where they began. The mystery was never positively cleared up; although, on the examination of Dr. Rowel's establishment some time after, a circumstance occurred which gave ground for suspicion, that as that gentleman had been considerably cut up by the lawyer when alive, he had seized his opportunity to return the compliment. Every other description of evidence was obtained and arranged for the anticipated trial.

While the doctor soliloquized in the castle at York, whither he had been removed, information was conveyed to him of the rescue of Woodruff, and of old Jerry's death. His brother-in-law thus free, Rowel gave up everything as lost, and for some time after the receipt of the news remained in a state of stupor. Regarding himself as abandoned by fortune, he so far lost spirit as to sink into one of the most abject creatures that ever breathed. Dreading the course which Woodruff might adopt, he caused a formal communication to be made to that injured individual, in which he bound himself not only to restore the estate so long withheld, but to make every restitution in his power for the injuries sustained; injuries for which no compensation could atone, but which he yet trusted might be regarded with mercy.

"Unworthy," remarked Woodruff, when this statement was made to him—"unworthy as that man is, whom I cannot ever again name as a relation, yet I do not feel disposed to gratify any feeling of revenge. No; all I wish that man to do is, to be left to the reflection, that the evil labours of so many years have produced only a harvest of wretchedness. For the rest—the great and fearful trial of the future—that lies between his God and him."

Although every person who heard these sentiments could not but feel deeply the worthiness of that injured individual, yet the general sentiment appeared to be, that he forgot justice in his anxiety for mercy. Nevertheless, Mr. Woodruff persisted in his determination to leave his brother-in-law without other punishment than that which might be awarded to him on his trial.

While this trial was drawing on, the constabulary made themselves active in ferreting out every scrap of evidence, in the hope of fixing the guilt upon a man to whom everybody believed it to belong. The circumstances preceding and attendant on the case were of such an unusual nature, that, when the day of trial arrived, the most extraordinary interest was evinced by the public.

It is not my purpose to give the details, or to follow through its ramifications that mass of circumstantial evidence which the industry of the executive had accumulated. Neither is it needful to state more than that a most able defence was made by an eminent counsel retained on the part of the prisoner.

At length his lordship summed up in an address which occupied more than three hours in the delivery, after which the jury retired. They returned into court a few minutes before midnight, and before a breathless audience pronounced a verdict of **NOT GUILTY**. No sooner was it uttered than the prisoner dropped insensible in the dock. The people in the court murmured. The words **NOT GUILTY** were repeated on the stairs, and again outside, like magic. The multitude almost yelled for the murderer's blood. But the verdict had gone forth—a jury had pronounced him innocent. They cried for him to be brought forth, and desperately threatened to wait till he came out, and execute him on the spot. The time of night, the darkness that reigned around, the fearful passions of the mob, now aroused almost to phrensy, all combined to render the scene one never to be forgotten.

Under the circumstances, it will not be supposed that Rowel was set at liberty that night. For his own sake, there was but one course to pursue—to detain him within the castle. The crowd outside, evincing no disposition to disperse, was at length driven away by the aid of the police. Some of them, however, assembled again outside the walls of the city. The cry here soon became "For Nabbfield!" The spirit of destruction had arisen, and the threat of fire succeeded that of blood.

In the dead of night, a dense press of men moved rapidly, but stealthily, off, in a direction that offered the straightest line between York and that establishment. Scarcely a word was said during this fearful march; though many were the heavy stakes drawn from hedges in their path, and converted into clubs, as they proceeded. The dire determination of mischief, mistaken for justice, seemed gathered into one fierce, dark power, hurrying headlong and irresistible to the work of desolation.

Their outset had not been observed from the city; and none, save perhaps some late and solitary farm-servant, peeping fearfully from her lighted window when the dog barked, and the tramp and crash were heard as they passed below, knew of them on their road. Like a meteor that falls unseen when the world is asleep, that band was only known to have been by the trail of destruction it left behind. Comparatively a brief time afterward, the walls of Nabbfield were scaled, the gardens were trampled down, the trees uprooted. Now came the thundering at doors, the tearing down of shutters, the smashing of glass, and the shrieks and cries of the inhabitants, scarcely sensible from fear, and yet scarcely thrown off sleep. The invading party had entered the premises.

Scattered up and down the house might now have been seen desperate men, with their faces blackened, and otherwise disguised. Their first object seemed to be the seizure of the people who had the establishment in charge: and as this task, since the imprisonment of the doctor, had devolved upon his own wife, the strong man Robson, with their usual assistants, the force that had thus suddenly appeared found little difficulty in effecting their object. Robson himself had started up on hearing the first assault, and made his way half-dressed into one of the lower rooms, where he encountered half a dozen of the men described. Thinking the disturbance had arisen in consequence of some of the patients having broken from their cells, he began to call upon them in his usual manner to submit to their keeper, when he found himself seized by many arms at once, and informed, that if he were not quiet they should knock him on the head without ceremony.

Mrs. Rowel contrived to take refuge in a small outhouse, where she remained shivering with cold and terror.

The dependants of the establishment having been secured, the mob proceeded to pile up the furniture in the middle of the rooms, and set it on fire; while others broke open the cells, and let out the inmates. Some of these escaped into the woods, and during several days rambled wildly over the surrounding country; others were conveyed to one of the stables, and fastened in, under the care of Robson; while a few, it was believed, whose maladies rendered them incapable of knowing what was going on, were burnt to death in the flames, which subsequently enveloped the whole in one sheet of fire.

The incendiaries then departed without leaving any trace whereby their route could be discovered: and although eventually, a reward of five hundred pounds, and a pardon to any person not actually guilty of the offence, were offered by the government, no clue was ever obtained to lead to their conviction.

Notwithstanding the violence which Dr. Rowel might receive by making his appearance upon the scene of his crimes, he no sooner was informed of the destruction of his establishment than he grew frantic, and, in a state of excitement bordering on derangement, set off from York in as private a manner as possible.

On arriving at his late residence, he beheld only a black ruin, with but one solitary object near it which had survived the general desolation—the old yew-tree under which Woodruff had passed so many weary years, and which now brought back to the doctor's eye a picture of all that had led to this. The tree used to look black before; but now, amid the greater blackness of the place, it looked gayly green in the sunshine, as though it rejoiced over the wild justice that had overtaken one guilty of so many crimes.

Outside was a throng of gazers, kept off by the constabulary. On a knoll at some little distance he recognised Lupton and Woodruff, watching the workmen employed in recovering as much of the property as might have escaped with partial damage. He would have got out, but dared not.

Unrecognised in his carriage, he was secure; and having drawn up to the spot where the little party stood, he gazed with intensity of look upon the operations. It was plain some strange idea had come into his mind; it seemed written in his features that something might be found which he would have no man know.

"But it was a wooden box," thought he, "and it could not escape."

Yet, as he comforted himself thus, the possibility was still standing on his brow as plainly as did the mark on Cain's. Still the workmen worked, and he still gazed. At last they carried out on a hand-barrow a heap of broken furniture.

"'Tis it!" exclaimed the doctor, madly, as he dashed his fist through the window; and having rapidly opened the door, rushed distractedly to the men.

This sudden apparition so astonished the people, that all fled backward in fear. Mr. Lupton and Woodruff, besides many others, instantly recognised the doctor; while the first-named gentleman as instantly hastened after him, in order at once to know the cause of this wild proceeding, and to prevent by magisterial authority the mischief which he feared might ensue.

"That's it!—it's mine!—my own!" cried the doctor, as he threw himself upon a box of considerable dimensions, deeply scorched, but not burnt through. At the same time he clasped his arms about it. The workmen interfered.

"Molest him not," said Mr. Lupton.

"I swear it is mine!" again exclaimed Rowel, "and no man shall open it while I live. I'm innocent; they judged me so last night. People will destroy me if it's seen. They'll swear it is *his* body."

"What body?" demanded Mr. Lupton, in astonishment.

"His—his. I'm——. No; his who died. They shall not open it." Again the doctor endeavoured to hide it with his body.

Mr. Lupton saw in this more than appeared upon the surface; and accordingly commanded the constabulary to protect Mr. Rowel back to the carriage, and convey the box to Kiddal.

The doctor made such a desperate resistance, and raved so furiously, that great force was required to get him into the carriage; and it was found necessary to bind him ere his conveyance could be considered safe. This done, he was driven off to the residence of his brother on Sherwood Forest.

During these transactions, the excitement of the multitude was so great, that, but for the judicious measures adopted, the disorders of the previous night would have been concluded by the murder of the doctor. This fearful consequence was, however, happily avoided. Mr. Woodruff again joined Mr. Lupton, and followed the crowd that accompanied the mysterious box to the squire's own residence.

A short time after, the above-named individuals, with one or two others, retired into a private room, whither the chest had been carried, and remained present while a heavy lock upon it was broken, and the uplifted lid displayed a sight so horrible, that the strongest-nerved present recoiled. Before them, huddled up to make it fit into its habitation, lay a corpse, sufficiently perfect to leave not the slightest doubt but that they looked upon the remains of the unfortunate Skinwell. By what motive the doctor had been actuated in taking the body from its grave, could only be conjectured; the most probable one was, that he had done so to destroy all traces of the poison. But why he should still preserve so horrible an object few attempted to divine. Whatever the cause, however, the fact was proved; since the remains were subsequently identified by many. Another circumstance remains to be recorded, as it may also serve to illustrate Dr. Rowel's conduct.

Beneath the head of the corpse was found a smaller and curiously ornamented box, wherein the title-deeds of Charnwood had been kept during many generations. On being opened, it was found still to contain them in the same state in which Rowel had so many years ago possessed himself of them, after securing the person of their owner. The effect of Mr. Skinwell's conduct in resisting the doctor's solicitations to co-operate with him in altering those writings now became apparent.

Mr. Woodruff having taken them into his own custody, he and his daughter set out to take possession of their hereditary home. On their arrival, however, they found it inhabited by tenants whom the reader will feel surprised to find there.

No long period was required after Colin's arrival at Mr. Calvert's to enable him to discover that deep anxiety reigned throughout that household touching her who so late was its life-spring.

Miss Jenny, who had lately confined herself much to her chamber, was introduced by her sister; the latter having communicated to her the arrival of Roger and Colin.

"How changed!" thought our hero, as his spirit sank at the sight of her. In her face was written that *the past* was all of a pleasant existence she should ever look upon. Yet when she saw him, though the father looked solemn, and the mother chidingly, she flew to his arms. For what were a father's looks, or a mother's wishes? What was all the world now to her?

At this sight, so unexpected and affecting, her mother sobbed aloud; Mr. Calvert turned away in silence. Her sister seized her hands, and pressed them with a loving pressure, while honest Roger, with the tears bursting from his eyes, struck his hand upon the table in sudden agony, and exclaimed.

"Though I don't swear, I say she *shall* have him, damme, if she shan't!"

The plainness of this declaration contrasted so with the occasion that scarcely a person could forbear smiling; while every one felt a conviction that Roger's words would eventually come true. But, as suddenly as that conviction flashed across the mind, so, with respect to Mr. and Mrs. Calvert, did it as suddenly cease. For though, during some few moments they felt half inclined to relent, yet, as the cause of that sudden conversion lost its temporary influence, they fell back upon old objections with increased prejudice.

Long did these two afterward discuss the matter, while Colin and Jenny were rapidly settling it without any discussion at all.

While the last-named pair regarded the question as altogether one of the heart, the former held it as totally a question of the head: but, inasmuch as the worst philosopher may venture to back the heart against the head in any contention, our hero and Miss Jenny would certainly have triumphed, had it not happened that, before their forces could be brought to bear, Mr. Calvert sent a message to Colin, requesting his company in the study, and delivered to him the following speech:

"After what has occurred, Mr. Clink, I feel that it becomes my duty as a father to come to some decisive determination. Much as I respect Mr. Lupton and yourself, there are causes which made me fearful, when I found your preference for Jenny, that a continued acquaintance between you would not lead to happiness. I shall not allude to those causes more directly; but they are insurmountable. And though I am aware that such matters are frequently regarded with indifference, yet I feel compelled thus to declare my sentiments, in the hope that nothing more will be required to assure you of the course which I wish you to adopt."

"Sir!" said Colin, as his heart seemed to swell into his throat, "I cannot but respect your motives. I know your objections—they are not to be removed." He would have spoken more, but could not.

"Do not mistake me," observed Mr. Calvert. "It is your misfortune, not your crime. It was my hope that Jenny and you might possibly dissolve this acquaintance yourselves, and render such an explanation as the present needless. But I have been mistaken. We cannot go on thus longer. Nevertheless, carry with you the assurance that I still continue to remember your worthiness, and to regret so unhappy an ending to the young affection of one whom it would have been our delight, if possible, to have blessed with the good and worthy creature he sought.

"Bless you, my friend!" added he, "bless you! I cannot part with you without betraying more than becomes me."

"Your worthiness," replied Colin, "makes me, sir, lost what to say. Had you treated me harshly I could have replied. If you will have it so, I know not how to oppose; but though I go never to return, believe me, sir, my heart will be left with those I leave. I shall do my best to live out my life with the memory of her whom I am forbidden to know in any other manner."

"I am afraid," rejoined his friend, "that on neither side shall we cease to feel pain: but it will be our duty to bow before those decrees which we cannot escape. And now," added Mr. Calvert, "do not prolong this scene. We can do no more. Good bye!" he quitted the room.

But Roger Calvert and Colin had a farther conversation below-stairs, which ended in producing a determination of importance. Roger's conduct, indeed, throughout had inspired our hero with confidence, and now induce him, after the scene described, to draw his friend into an unobserved part of the house, and propose that they should settle the matter in the manner already suggested—that is, through the medium of an elopement; and that considerate young fellow readily undertook the task of informing Jenny of the design.

It was agreed between them that, the more successfully to carry on their plan, Colin should take leave of the family under the impression, on their parts, of never seeing him again; but that, instead of quitting London, he should retire to some hotel, where he could remain until matters were arranged for his and Jenny's departure. This accordingly he did, quitting Mr. Calvert's house not without grief on the part of all, except Roger; though on his own with such a miserable exhibition of sorrow, considering the situation in which he was placed, that the good Calverts were quite astonished, and began to suspect that after all there was not half the feeling in him they had been led to believe. Roger was appealed to, but professed to have no ability in discovering springs of action. The truth was, that he felt disinclined for conversation. The departure of his friend had put a seal upon his tongue.

Within a few days it was remarked by the family that Jenny seemed astonishingly recovered from her melancholy, and hope began to be entertained that in a short time she would recover her painful disappointment, and become again that pleasant creature she was before her eyes met those of Mr. Clink. However, at the very time when everybody expected that this desirable consummation would be effected, then it was discovered to everybody's amazement that she was missing; Roger, too, had disappeared; nor was *Miss Jenny Calvert* ever found again. A guess at the real truth flashed across the minds of every one, and all agreed that, instead of ever seeing *Miss Jenny* again, they should be somehow or other introduced to Mrs. Colin Clink.

Mr. Calvert at first took the thing in dudgeon, and ordered his horses to pursue the flying trio, but, by the time saddle and harness were ready, it chanced to be discovered that nobody knew whether to prefer the east, west, north, or south quarters in the proposed search. Probabilities, however, being in favour of Kiddal Hall, Mr. Calvert and his son set out on an expedition to that residence, in hopes of arriving there in time to prevent that marriage which Mr. Calvert determined never to sanction.

In the meantime our hero and his friends were making forced marches,

until our little party had the pleasure of beholding the walls within which they were to be made secure of future happiness. Thus felt our hero and his pretty companion, while Roger regarded the house with interest since it also contained her who was everything to him.

Mr. Woodruff's residence was situated in one of the pleasantest portions of Leicestershire. It was one of those old, large, and substantial brick buildings, characteristic of a particular period of our domestic architecture. Its gardens were full of stately trees, which seemed to speak their own dignity, and declare to the passer-by that beneath their branches had flourished some generations.

To this place they were welcomed by Mr. Woodruff and his daughter; and though, at the first introduction to Miss Jenny as the intended bride of Colin, poor Fanny in vain endeavoured to hide the feelings of the moment, yet a short time brought her back to a sense of the situations of both, while the presence of her own accepted lover, in the person of Roger Calvert, not only sustained her spirits, but took off much of the keenness of those reflections.

It was also on this occasion Colin learned from Fanny that her father and herself, on paying their first visit to their newly-recovered property, found it occupied by the family of that identical Miss Wintlebury whom he and she had so strangely met in London. At the mention of that name Colin blushed so deeply that Miss Jenny felt misgivings as to his perfect fidelity, and in a manner half in joke, half in earnest, charged him with deception, to which her lover could not so well reply as by giving that short story respecting Miss Wintlebury, with which the reader is acquainted.

Miss Wintlebury herself had improved materially in health, since not only the country, but likewise the altered circumstances in which her father had placed her, assisted to throw in her way every advantage that one in her situation could require. She still remembered Colin's conduct with the most grateful feelings, and testified them by entertaining his friends. Besides which, on Mr. Wintlebury being informed of the particulars of their story, of which already he had heard much from common fame, he volunteered at once to quit the premises, and gave Mr. Woodruff possession of his own.

It was a proud morning for our hero when, with Jenny on his arm, he hastened to the little church hard by Mr. Woodruff's residence, there to pronounce the sacred promise to love and cherish till death the pretty creature beside him. Fanny and Harriet Wintlebury officiated as bridesmaids. The priest had just uttered the solemn injunction—"Those whom God had joined together, let no man put asunder," when a stir was heard at the church-door, and Mr. Calvert and his son, in a state of excitement, hurried in. The former rushed toward the altar, and seizing Jenny, exclaimed: "I forbid the marriage!"—but the priest waved his hand, and pronounced that Colin and Jenny were "man and wife together," concluding with that blessing which so beautifully finishes the church ceremony on these occasions.

As the party retired, Mr. Calvert approached, and taking the newly-made wife's hand—"Jenny!" said he, "I never expected this. However, I will not reproach you. The thing is done, and cannot be undone. It is not for me to put asunder whom God hath joined together: I must make the best of it, and, therefore, seeing there is no remedy, let me join in the blessing pronounced, and ask that ye may so live together in this life, that in the world-to-come ye may have life everlasting."

Poor Jenny burst into tears, and clung round her father's neck ; while Colin stood by, deeply affected, and Roger complimented his father and brother upon their being, as he expressed it, "an inch behind the tail."

On the return of the party, Jenny's father informed them how he had in the first instance directed his steps to Kiddal Hall, and found his old friend, Mrs. Lupton, in a state that promised a speedy dissolution. Under those circumstances he had felt anxious to defer, if he could not prevent, the ceremony which had taken place. These intentions, however, being frustrated, nothing remained but to reconcile matters with all parties ; and to effect this, Mr. Calvert deemed it needful that the newly-married pair should return with him to Kiddal ; because, in case of the unfortunate lady of that house desiring to see them before her death, their presence would prevent her dying wishes being disappointed. Accordingly, at an early period they set out ; and, on their arrival, were welcomed by the squire with a degree of satisfaction scarcely to be expressed, and a degree of unmingled happiness would have reigned, but for the situation of Mrs. Lupton, who now rapidly sunk.

"So you are married, Jenny?" said she, as she took the young wife by the hand, and kissed her.

"I hope we shall be happy," replied she.

"So I hoped once," returned the lady ; "and see what has come of it! Yet I loved him, as you may now. And as for you, sir—" said she, addressing Colin ; "look that you never despise what you once loved ; that you do not take up as a jewel what you afterward cast away as a stone. I tell you it will break her heart. Walter!" she continued—"Walter! I want to see my husband." Mr. Lupton entered the chamber. "Walter!" said she, faintly, "I am going—but I wish to tell you I die in peace—in love with you, even now. Very soon, and I shall trouble you no more. I have loved and watched over you here—I will do so hereafter.—God bless you!" And as she uttered those words her hand became convulsive. She sank back dying—dead!

The night for the interment came, and the lady of Kiddal was laid beside many a fanciful beauty and stalwart man, who had laid down their beauty and their strength before her.

It became known all over the country-side some time afterward that Mr. Lupton had become remarkably serious after his wife's death ; all the theories that had been set afloat touching his second marriage, for everybody believed he would be married again, were found, day after day, never to be carried out on his part by any corresponding action, so at length the neighbourhood were fain to give him credit for being a good widower, who could not find in his heart to marry again.

After the event described, our hero's father would no longer think of permitting him to take up his residence elsewhere. Mr. Lupton now declared it to be his intention to instal the young couple at once in that family residence which he had already made provision for eventually bequeathing to them, and of having them considered as constituting, along with himself, the family of the place. At the same time he expressed his desire that Colin should take the management of his estates into his own hands : observing, that he now felt but little interest in those matters which formerly had occupied all his attention, and that for the future he wished to devote his time to pursuits more congenial with his feelings, as well as better adapted to fit him for that change he must undergo.

This arrangement being acted upon, Colin came to be looked upon as the greatest man in that parish where once we found him a miserable child, turned rudely out of his cradle at night, by a hard-hearted steward, to starve with his mother beneath the naked sky.

As to that same steward, the notorious Mr. Longstaff, he had now grown old, but still occupied the same situation. Prophecies sometimes come true. When Mr. Longstaff turned Mrs. Clink out of her house, it will not have been forgotten that she pointed toward the little bed in which our then little hero lay, and, addressing the steward, exclaimed, "*There's a sting in that cradle for you yet*!" Mr. Longstaff himself remembered these words, and trembled when he found to what station the squire had exalted his son. And though, I verily believe, notwithstanding his deserts, that Colin Clink would never have molested him, yet, as though retributive justice was not to be turned aside, it oddly enough was discovered, on examining his accounts, that defalcations of long standing existed. On this discovery the steward was discharged, and threatened with a prosecution: but as he made himself quite as humble as he had before been proud, and said a great many pitiful things about his family, the squire consented, under his son's persuasion, to suffer the grievance to be hushed up.

Could the reader, who has travelled with me so far, have been present at Kiddal Hall some six years later, he would have seen a joyous sight. Once more did the old house look gay. A grand entertainment was being given. Gay devices adorned the walls; temporary bowers were erected in the gardens; a flag waved from the building; tables were spread over the green space, in the middle of the village; labour was laid aside; and every soul seemed to rejoice.

By a special act on the part of Mr. Lupton, it had been settled that Colin should take the family name. This had been done; and therefore I may now declare, that on the happy day here spoken of was celebrated the birth of the first son of Colin and Jenny Lupton. Already had they been blessed with two girls, that now had become the prettiest ornaments of the house. Proudly did these two young people walk among the tenantry, rejoicing in the good wishes which were heard on every side.

To add to the general joy, Mr. Roger Calvert and Fanny Woodruff, after a courtship of unaccountable duration, had selected that day also as their wedding-day; and now, along with the father of the latter, and the whole family of the former, joined in each other's pleasure, and that of the inhabitants of Kiddal.

About dusk, Colin walked forth for the purpose of enjoying the enjoyment of others; and, among other signs that all were happy, observed a knot of bumpkins gathered round something that appeared to afford them amusement, by the peals of laughter which broke from the crowd. No sooner did the latter observe who approached than they respectfully fell back. Colin perceived a man past the middle age, apparently worn down by trouble and poverty, with a pack on his back, like a travelling pedlar, a stick in his hand, and a small, shaggy, wire-haired terrier at his heels.

The first sight of this odd figure was sufficient to assure our hero that he beheld Peter Veriquear. Colin, to the amazement of all, seized him by the hand, with the exclamation,

"Mr. Veriquear? Or is it possible I can be mistaken?"

"Whether you are mistaken or not," replied the individual, "is your business, and not mine; just as it is my business to say I am glad to see my old assistant, Mr. Colin Clink."

"But under what strange circumstances have you come here?"

"That," replied Peter, "is my concern, and not yours; though, perhaps I ought to make it my business to tell you."

"Certainly," responded Colin; "for I can assure you that I feel it to be my business to know. But come," he continued, "let me conduct you to better quarters, where we can talk over those things which I feel anxious to hear."

Mr. Peter Veriquear and his dog accompanied our hero to Kiddal Hall, where he soon found himself seated at a plentiful table.

When Peter had sufficiently satisfied himself,

"Ah, sir!" said he, "you will feel as much astonished to find that I have sunk so low, as I am to see how high you have risen."

"Why, what can have happened?"

"Sad things!" replied Peter. "In the first place, I have lost all my family. Mrs. Veriquear—the little Veriquears, that you used to take such pleasure in drawing about in the coach—all have been taken from me. One of those horrible fevers laid them down all together on beds of sickness. The doctor made it his affair to physic them so much, that the stock of bottles in my warehouse was materially increased. At the same time the bone-trade became bare, and the rag-trade was torn to rags by competition. One after another the family dropped off, until I could not help thinking the undertaker did nothing else but make it his business to go backward and forward from his house to mine. The consequence was, that everything I had saved to keep my family alive was spent in putting them into the ground. My house seemed a desert to me. Everywhere it appeared that I ought to meet one or other of them, and yet I was always disappointed—always alone. Used to having those little people for ever about my feet—to feed them at my table—to talk about them to my wife—to think how I should dispose of them as they grew up, and speculate on their luck in after-life—and thus suddenly to be deprived of them all—not one left—not a solitary one; to be myself the only one where there had been many!" Peter's feelings had made him eloquent, and tears scrambled oddly down his cheeks. Colin could not but feel Veriquear's words. He requested him to conclude his narrative.

"At last," added Peter, "I made it my business to dispose of my business, and sell off all I had; and, though it was a good deal to look at, it produced me little money. However, as I could no longer endure the place, I made the best of the case I could, and resolved to travel to where I originally came from, one of the Orkney Islands, and am now going back on foot, as you see."

Mr. Colin Lupton felt more than he expressed in words; but by his actions the effect may be judged, as he insisted on poor Peter being well lodged for the night, and before his departure made him such a present as would entitle him to be considered a man of substance in the little Orkney Island, toward which he finally steered his course.

Having now brought the fortunes of the characters who have figured in these pages to a close, it only remains to relate some few stray scraps of information, and to conclude the story.

It will be remembered that the last time we parted with Dr. Rowel, we left him in a state of high mental excitement, and conveyed by his friends to his brother, on the borders of Sherwood Forest. To reduce that excitement, or even to prevent its increasing to a state of confirmed

madness, all care was found unavailable. Eventually, he was confined for life in a public institution. There he raved continually about an imaginary skeleton in an imaginary box, and gave utterance to unintelligible jargon, wherein the names of Woodruff, of his sister Frances, and of his niece, were mingled. He continued to exhibit to the very last a picture of misery and horror.

Mr. Woodruff was a frequent visiter at the hall, especially after the marriage of his daughter. Under these circumstances, a degree of interest was observed to grow up between him and Miss Shirley, and suspicions began to be entertained that a match might be eventually made between them. Whether any reliance could be placed upon them I cannot determine, any more than upon a similar report respecting Sylvester and Miss Wintlebury—since people frequently conclude matches by report which never go off in reality; though equally true it is that many are made, of which gossips are never afforded an opportunity of reporting upon at all.

THE END.

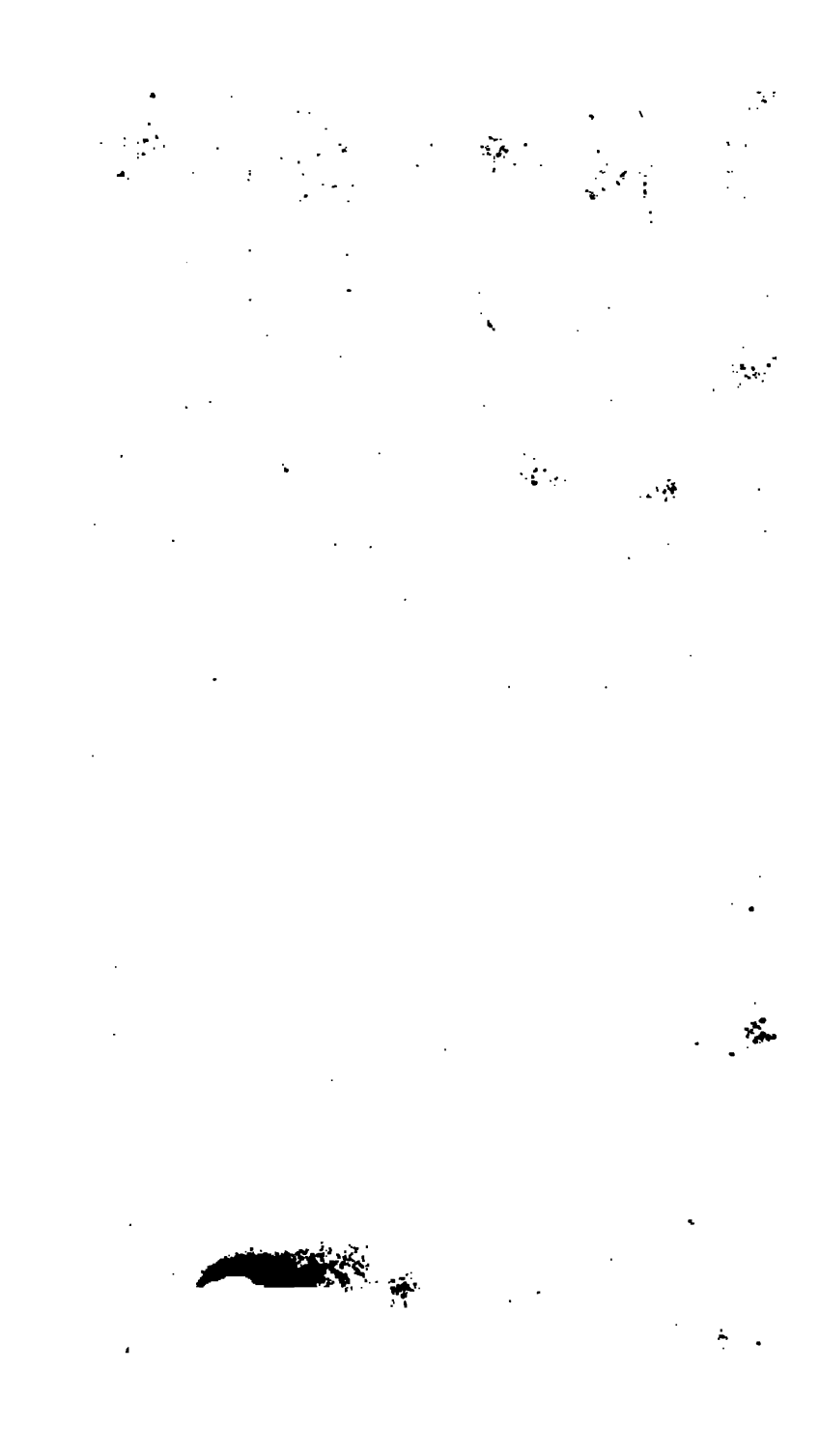












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